

CHAP. XIX.

THE DESERT.

RATHER more than two months ago, standing on the steps of Shepherd's Hotel, I had entered into a partnership with an officer in Her Majesty's Service, the result of which was a voyage on the Nile. This partnership having been dissolved some time since, by reason of one of the "parties" having left Cairo for Jerusalem, I was now again anxious to meet with another "party" with whom I could swear eternal friendship, at any rate, so long as we might be travelling together, having been previously informed that there was a "party" in the hotel who was making up a caravan for Jerusalem. I was standing exactly in the same spot in front of Shepherd's, chatting with one of my Cairene acquaintances as to what arrangements were necessary for crossing the Desert, the best time for starting, &c., when a third "party" joined us; and from a remark which he made, I was induced to ask if he was the "party" I had heard speak of as

about to start for Jerusalem. After replying in the affirmative, he asked whether I was the "other party" that *he* had heard speak of as endeavouring to make up a caravan. Coming to the conclusion that we were both "*the parties*" that each had heard speak of, we introduced ourselves to each other, and proposed that we should join forces, and face the perils of desert and Syrian travelling together.

So far all being well, we went to church (it being Sunday), and then to smoke a pipe and sip some sherbet with the private Secretary of our Consul General, who had told me he was going to part with a servant likely to make us a good dragoman.

Remembering my lot on the Nile, with regard to dragomen, I determined to be more circumspect this time; so that the next two or three days were spent by me and my new friend almost entirely in reading testimonials of all sorts. Our choice was at length made in favour of a man of great height and size, by name Mohammad Mazawood, formerly a kawass in the service of Mr. Murray, the Consul General, of great proficiency in the French, Italian, and Turkish languages, though his knowledge of English was exceedingly limited. As a boy he had been a pipe-cleaner, or boot-cleaner,

or something of the sort, to Champollion, who had taken some pains in teaching him French.

Leaving everything in the hands of Mohammad, we told him we should like to leave Cairo that day week, that he was to make all the necessary arrangements respecting the camels and provisions, and so relieve us of all trouble.

Rides to Shoobra and the citadel, hours spent in the bazaars, chatting and smoking with the vendors of silks and perfumes, occupied the remainder of my Cairene days.

The evening before leaving the city, I attended, according to invitation, a native wedding. The ceremony was observed in the house of the bride's father, a rich merchant, dwelling in the Coptic quarter. It was about 8 o'clock when, preceded by an Arab bearing a fanoose, I arrived at the door of the house. Brilliantly illuminated within, there streamed out through the large gateway on to the dark and narrow street a flood of light: sounds of music and dancing, mingling with the chink of castanets, were stirring with envy the hearts of the crowd outside, to whom admittance was denied.

Bidding my lantern-bearer await my return, I entered, and was conducted through several apartments into the large court-yard of the house, which

had been roofed in for the occasion. On a low divan running all round, reclined the numerous guests. The atmosphere was so laden with clouds of Latakia, which kept rising in thick volumes from their multitudinous pipe-bowls, that it was some seconds before I could distinguish a picturesque group of Ghawazee — or rather dancing boys, for, as I said before, there are no Ghawazee now in Cairo — who were delighting with their graceful movements these followers of Mahomet. High above our heads, at the hareem windows, glittered white hands, and bright eyes sparkled 'mid the waving to and fro of veils and kerchiefs; whilst ever and anon burst forth the loud and tremulous *ziraleet** of the women.

In one of the rooms opening on to the court sat the master of the house, entertaining a few select friends. My introduction over, I was motioned to take my seat on the divan to his left, and, being accommodated with a pipe and the usual accompaniment, a small silver *fingan* of coffee, I refrained from outraging the sanctity of the “back parlour,” by

* The *ziraleet* is the cry of joy made by the women on all such occasions. It is produced by them in the throat; though I found that the only way in which I could arrive at the same effect, was by pitching my voice into a falsetto, and slapping the mouth when open, as children are in the habit of doing.

uttering a syllable during the whole time that I sat there.

Had this been an English, instead of an Egyptian wedding, I should have most deservedly been stamped in mine host's mind as about one of the "slowest" young men that he had ever had the pleasure of entertaining: as it was, I believe I acted in the most correct manner by preserving the strictest silence; for I had already learned that the best method of obtaining the heart of a Turk, was by, if possible, surpassing him in sombreness and gravity.

After sitting here for about an hour, I made my bow to the host, and strolled out again into the court-yard; and, questioning one of the numerous dragomen who were loitering about, I inquired if anything in the shape of amusement was going to happen. "If you will wait," said one of them, "till about two hours before sunrise, you will see the bride taken away to the house of the bridegroom." On looking at my watch, and seeing that it was only a little after nine, I determined to forego the pleasure of beholding the happy pair; so bidding adieu to the host, I went out to look for my lantern bearer, in order to be escorted back to my quarters. My vexation at not finding him, may be the better conceived, when I inform my readers of one of the

regulations of almost all Oriental cities, *viz.* that "Whosoever is caught by the police, three hours after sunset, walking about without a lantern or light of some kind, is immediately lodged for the night in the nearest guard-house, nor is any excuse listened to until the next morning." I suppose, taking it for granted that I should not leave the festive scene till a little before sunrise, he had gone off home, and left me to find my own way by Phœbus' light instead of *his* fanoose. However, notwithstanding all Mohammad Ali's wise regulations, I contrived to reach home without being either incarcerated, or knocked on the head and robbed.

At an early hour the next morning, Mohammad came to report that the caravan was made up, and that he only now awaited our orders to start immediately. As all our own arrangements had been settled some days back, I bade farewell to Mr. Müller, whose kindness to me whilst in Cairo I shall ever remember with gratitude, and with my new friend I set forth on my desert journey.

All our camp effects, provisions, water, &c., had been distributed equally upon the backs of eight camels; upon one of which Mohammad had perched his goodly proportions. My friend and I had been deluding ourselves with the notion that *we* were to

be mounted upon the humps of two fleet dromedaries, by the help of which we had pictured ourselves as not so much forming a *part* of the caravan as in being in *attendance* upon it, at times scouring on ahead on the look out for Bedouins, or in search of the curious; and I may say that our mortification was excessive, when, on looking out of the windows of Shepherd's dining-room, we saw that our portmanteaus, bedding, &c. had been packed upon the backs—not of two dromedaries, but—of two camels of the very largest and ugliest of their kind. In anger we turned to Mohammad, inquiring why something more picturesque had not been obtained for our use. “Ah Monsieur,” said he, “I am very sorry, but all the dromedaries have been engaged for the Petra route, and these are the best I could get for you.”

Swallowing our vexation, we went through the painful ordeal of mounting, and then, bidding adieu to Cairo, we passed through the Gate of Victory, and sallied forth upon the desert ocean *en route* for Palestine.

The body of our caravan, with the exception of the camel which Mohammad rode, had left the city some hours before us, with orders to pitch the tents, and get everything in readiness for our reception.

It was a little after noon, when, leaving the mosques and minarets of Cairo behind us, we "pushed off" into the desert, and getting clear of the numerous cemeteries belonging to the city, we plodded on, swinging backwards and forwards with every step of our camels, for the space of five hours.

Daylight was fast forsaking us, when Mohammad, pointing to some distant palms, drew our attention to the tents and the camp fires just discernible in the gathering darkness. "But surely," said we, "all those tents, and camels wandering about near them, do not belong to us?" — Nor did they: on arrival we found that another caravan of English travellers, having left the same day, had pitched their tents in the same spot, known by the name of "El Hanka." To my great joy they proved to be friends who had landed in Alexandria some months back, on the same day with me, and whom I had met several times on the Nile. So we were not to be quite alone in our desert voyage, which was exceedingly pleasant. The party consisted of a clergyman travelling with his wife and another lady.

The excitement of our first day in the Desert tended somewhat to diminish our appetites; but somehow we managed to make away with a large portion of the cook's preparation of macaroni and

Irish stew — a dish at which the Arabs are rather “great.”

The camels, after their day's work, were all on their haunches, ranged in a circle around the tents, each one busily engaged in munching a great “mound” of green food, and which, as the dragoman explained, was not more than was good for them, since it was all they would have for the next week or ten days.

Forming groups about two or three large fires, our camel-men and servants sang and chattered over their suppers; capacious kettles, suspended among the flames, hissed; tea cups rattled — in fact, everything conspired to render our first encampment the most delightful pic-nic that we had ever been engaged in. The greatest source of pleasure was to know that it was all real, that it was no “taking tea in the arbour,” with the dining-room windows only a dozen yards off; but this was to be our actual mode of life for the next two months.

By ten o'clock all was quiet. The camel-men had wrapped themselves in their capotes, and had stretched themselves on the sand to sleep; the fires were almost out; and a full moon was shedding its milky radiance over our desert homes. We also retired to our couches — but not to sleep! The

first night in the Desert was decidedly against sweet dreams and calm repose ; for our Arab guards, giving a noisy watchword every five minutes, and singing in the intervals, completely bothered poor Morpheus, who tried, I am sure, to do the best he could for us — but all in vain.

The eastern horizon was glowing with the near approach of sunrise, when the dragoman, entering our tent, woke us, and advised us to be stirring, if we wished to get the greater part of our day's work over before the heat of the day commenced. Whilst we dressed, the breakfast, consisting of an omelette, macaroni, and coffee, was prepared outside the tent. This we presently discussed, surrounded with all the *débris* and confusion of half-a-dozen tents being struck and packed, with all the camp *et ceteras*, upon the backs of twenty camels, who, with their long necks, were wandering about in disagreeable proximity to our breakfast table, occasionally dipping their noses into our dishes.

In shorter time than I could have supposed it possible, everything was transferred from the ground to their humps ; and, mounting our own un-gainly steeds, we fell into the rear of the caravan, which was soon plodding over the desert expanse. A few burnt embers, and the sand a little turned

with the tent pegs, were the only signs which remained to tell of the merry evening, the dinner, and the breakfast which we had enjoyed at El Hanka. Nor would these traces exist there long; for the breeze, which was already creeping over the Desert with the rising sun, would in a few hours entirely obliterate them: and had we returned at sunset with the intention of pitching our tents in the spot we "seemed to know so well," no amount of searching or reconnoitring would have enabled us to be at all sure whether or no we were within a mile of our *quondam* restingplace.

However well your saddle may be arranged, the first two or three days spent on a camel's back cannot fail to be attended with a great deal of bodily suffering. With these pleasant anticipations, I mounted my camel; but so happy and comfortable was I for the first hour, ensconced between my two portmanteaus, to prevent my rolling over the side—the hard back of the animal softened by the intervention of rugs and coats without number, a white cotton umbrella fastened at my back to shield me from the sun's intense heat—so happy and comfortable did I feel, that I began to hope that the agonies of camel-riding were either immensely exaggerated, or else that they did not exist at all. At first I

swayed to and fro with every step, and positively liked it; by degrees my back began to ache, so I tried to sit erect without moving. This proved a relief for a few minutes; but, finding the effort too great to continue long in this position, I attempted to recline with my head resting on my hand. This last manœuvre I found would not do at any price; for the motion of the camel's hind legs was so utterly at variance with the motion of his fore legs, that I was jerked upwards, and forwards and sideways, and finally ended in nearly rolling off altogether.

What was I to do? In distress both of mind and body, I turned to Mohammad. His advice was that I should allow myself, as at first, to be swung backwards and forwards, and that I should very soon (*i. e.* in a day or two) accommodate myself to what I now considered anything but a comfortable motion.

Without going into the details of all that I suffered for the next two or three days, how that on several occasions I slid from the camel's back to the ground, in despair of ever accustoming my half-dislocated joints to the ceaseless jerking and swaying to and fro, and how that I often determined to trudge on foot over the hot desert sand all the way to Jerusalem, rather than endure it longer—without devoting a page in description of all these miseries,

I shall merely say, that the day did at last arrive when I descended from my camel, after many hours' riding, in as happy and comfortable a state of mind and body as if I had been lolling in the easiest of arm chairs.

We left El Hanka an hour before sunrise, and, journeying in a north-easterly direction for nine hours, we pitched our tents, a little before sunset, close to the town of Belbeys. We had not yet lost sight of "land," so to speak, but all day we had skirted the edge of the Desert — cultivation being still visible on the horizon to our left. Towards sunset, making a "tack in shore," we approached the aforesaid town of Belbeys, and pitched our tents beneath its walls.

After dining *chez nous*, and taking coffee *chez nos amis*, we retired for the night, the dragoman having first blazed away with his "carabine," to warn any wandering Bedouins of the reception they were likely to meet with.

The next morning, as usual, we were up before the sun, and, whilst we breakfasted outside the tents, the camels were packed and everything prepared for the day's march. Our friends being ready before we were, went slowly on, leaving us to follow; but just as we were on the point of starting, my com-

panion found, to his dismay, that his watch and chain were missing. Of course Mohammad was called; but on his expressing entire ignorance of their whereabouts, we were forced to let our friends gradually increase their distance from us, whilst we examined our different camel-men and servants. As no one knew anything of the missing articles, we now gave orders to unpack the camels, and a regular search to be made, and thus an hour passed away; but still the watch and chain were not forthcoming.

It seems that my companion, not having finished his toilet when I shouted out to him that the macaroni was getting cold, laid his watch on the bed, and came out to breakfast, intending to pack his portmanteau afterwards: meanwhile, to expedite matters, the tent had been removed, and the bed with his open portmanteau had been left as they were on the sand, until we had finished our breakfast.

As my friend could swear to having laid his watch on the bed, it was very evident that some one of the camel-men had taken possession of it whilst we were deep in the macaroni dish: yet no one had *seen* it, much less *taken* it.

Following Mohammad's advice, we again pitched the tents, and proceeded to have all the men examined before the Cadi of Belbeys. As might have

been expected, two or three hours were wasted, and several dollars were expended, without our getting any nearer to the production of the watch. The only point we could arrive at was, that a man, in the garb of a Bedouin of a most disreputable appearance, had been seen hovering about the tents whilst they were being struck, his excuse being that he wished to be allowed to travel under our escort as far as El Arish.

After wasting another hour in search of this disreputable individual, the Cadi wrote a letter to the Governor of El Arish, to the effect that he should take into custody any man arriving in that town answering to his description. This letter he gave into our keeping, to deliver on arrival at El Arish : and so we left Belbeys, taking with us the good Cadi's earnest hopes that the watch and chain would eventually "turn up."

By the time we reached our tents, the "kampseen," or sirocco of the Desert, which had been threatening ever since we left Cairo, had commenced; so, following Mohammad's advice, we got us into our canvass houses, and, instead of proceeding on our journey, we closed up every little opening we could find, and, lying down on our beds, we went fast asleep.

This wind is termed the "kampseen," on account

of the period during which it lasts, viz. fifty days. It never blows for more than three or five days at a time, though the whole time, from the day on which it commences until the expiration of the fifty days is called "the time of the *kampseen*." Fortunately for us, we had a very mild specimen of it, being nearly choked with heat instead of sand. I must confess that I was a little disappointed in it: for when Mohammad, pointing in the direction whence it was approaching us, said, "*Voilà messieurs ! le kampseen il vient,*" I fully expected it would be a case of throwing ourselves on our faces to the ground, whilst the poor camels buried their noses in the sand to avoid suffocation. Instead of that, we merely retired to our tents and went to sleep; and when we woke up towards sunset, the weather was so much clearer that we were enabled to renew our march.

CHAP. XX.

ENCOUNTER WITH BEDOUINS.

HAVING been warned at Belbeys that some parties of armed Bedouins were in the neighbourhood, who would certainly, as Mohammad made out—as what dragoman will not?—attack or annoy us in one way or another, if they fell in with us, we determined to make a night march of it, as much for the purpose of eluding them, as of coming up with our friends, who by this time must have been twenty miles in advance.

The hot wind of the Kampseen had died away at sunset, leaving the night air deliciously cool; whilst an unclouded moon lighted up our course over the desert sand brilliantly white with its rays.

During seven hours of the most perfect silence, our little caravan went slowly on its way to Palestine; and as, wrapped in my plaid, I nodded and dozed on the back of my camel, it seemed to me, in my dreamy state of half-consciousness, that I was being rocked to and fro upon the bosom of the wide Pacific, on a calm night, in an open boat. A little after midnight

I was awoke by my boat drifting on to a sand bank ; in other words, our caravan had halted, and my camel kneeling down whilst I was dreaming of the Pacific, I had been deposited most unceremoniously over his head on to the ground.

The next morning before the sun was up we were again on the march, constantly straining our eyes over the vast expanse of desert, in the hopes of discerning the advance body of our caravan. Towards noon some specks in motion were seen on the horizon before us, which at first were pronounced to be our friends ; but as the distance between us decreased, and we found they were approaching us instead of going our way, very little doubt was left in our minds that they were perhaps the very Bedouins whom we had been trying to avoid.

In the course of another half hour, we were enabled to make out a party of nine Bedouins, all fully armed and mounted on small fleet dromedaries. When we came within hail, we halted, and our sheikh, the owner of the camels which composed our caravan, rode forward to speak with them.

For a moment or two we felt decidedly anxious, as we were quite unable to cope with such formidable looking opponents ; and Mohammad unslung his carbine, whilst we fitted caps to the nipples of our

guns. In another minute, however, all our fears proved groundless; for after demanding to see our passports, they allowed us to proceed, and they were soon the mere specks on the horizon behind us as, an hour or so previous, they had been before us. During the rest of the day we travelled in silence over the hot sands, and at sunset encamped close to the tomb of an Arab saint, near to which was a well, shaded by a solitary sycamore.

Breakfast over the next morning, we struck our tents and continued our march, not forgetting to leave behind us a few piastres, a tribute of respect to the memory of the old sheikh who here lies asleep in his desert tomb. It is an Eastern custom always to leave a small offering at these tombs, an act of charity to the many poor pilgrims who pass them on their way from the shrines of Mecca to those of Jerusalem and Bagdad.

At noon we arrived at the small Bedouin village of Salla-héa, where for an hour we rested our camels, and spread our carpets on the ground to lunch. On questioning the people who came out of their huts to look at us, we found that some English, doubtless our friends, had encamped here the preceding night, and had only left a few hours before our arrival. Once more putting our caravan in motion we in-

creased our pace, in order to overtake them by sunset.

Two hours after leaving Salla-héa, our attention was suddenly caught by something white on the horizon fluttering in the sunlight. On a nearer approach we made out, with the aid of our glasses, three tents, and in the immediate vicinity camels to the number of twenty and more. At first we were sure they belonged to our friends,—but then why should they be encamping so early in the day? “To wait for us,” suggested Mohammad. “Of course,” we said, and rode briskly forward, happy at the prospect of again completing our caravan. Each moment the little encampment became more distinct, but each moment our perplexities increased. Our friends only had twelve camels, but already we had counted nearly thirty, grazing about among the stunted shrubs, and again we marvelled at the number of men. “They are Bedouins, by all that is true!” said my friend, with his telescope to his eye; “and fully armed, by all that is disagreeable!”

At length the horrid truth broke upon us, our friends had been stopped and made prisoners, and we were quietly riding into the same position! When at last within a hundred yards, all doubt on the subject was done away with, by their coming on foot to meet

us with very long faces, and informing us that we were all in the hands of the Philistines.

Putting a bold face on the matter, we descended from our camels, loaded our guns, and, with Moham-mad, who was swelling with indignation, we went forward to demand instant release, or, at any rate, good reason for our detention. Our tescaries, or passports, were asked for, and, on their being submitted to the leader of the party, were declared "informal."

Now, seeing that if they had been written in English, instead of Arabic characters, the rascally Bedouin would have been just as wise, it was quite clear that their only object in arresting us was to relieve us of our purses. The reason they gave was, that Abbas Pasha (it being the conscription time for pressing men into the army) had issued orders to the different Bedouin chiefs, for the stoppage of all Arab felláhs* travelling across the Desert without tescaries, or with tescaries that were informal. Of course it was useless expostulating with fourteen men armed from head to foot, who could look us calmly in the face, attired as we were in wide-awakes and shooting coats, and yet come to the conclusion that we were

* *Felláh* is the Arabic term for the labouring classes in Egypt.

poor Arabs in disguise, fleeing from the conscription ! so we shrugged our shoulders, and, being only three to fourteen, surrendered at discretion.

Having come to this arrangement, we next inquired what they proposed doing with us. They led off by saying that we should travel with them night and day, without being allowed to encamp either to eat or sleep, into some unknown part of the Desert where their sheikh lived, and that he should decide our fate.

Against this course we protested most strongly, not so much for our own sakes as for those of our lady companions, who were already so fatigued with excitement and their morning's march that they hardly knew how to support themselves.

As the Bedouins seemed bent on mischief, we sent Mohammad to talk with them alone, and try and obtain some amelioration of the sentence; whilst we, retiring to the tents, watched the conference with some anxiety. At a short distance, surrounded by the Bedouins, sat our dragoman, endeavouring to assuage their malice, but which he appeared unable to do, if we might judge from their vehement gestures, and the way in which they every now and then brandished their long guns and spears over their heads.

Matters continued thus for about a quarter of an hour; and, just as words were at the highest, our astonishment may be conceived, when we saw Mohammad suddenly jump up from the ground, and, all unarmed as he was, rush at one of the Bedouins, who was, without exaggeration, bristling all over with sabres and pistols, and, first hitting him over the head, proceed to kick him on a less distinguished part of his person. Of course all conference was immediately at an end, and we were thrown into a state of the greatest confusion.

Pursuing Mohammad, who was following up his attack with immense vigour, my friend and I succeeded in catching hold of his baggy breeches, whilst the other Bedouins kept back the champion on their side, who was eager to resent the injuries received. The reason Mohammad gave for this exhibition of wrath was, that the man he attacked had said something so grossly insulting about us, that he felt bound to visit it with instant punishment.

Our enemies, now preparing their murderous-looking guns, declared that, though they did not wish to proceed to extremities with us, nothing could save Mohammad — shoot him they would: “and his blood,” they said, “be upon his own head.”

The scene that then followed baffles all my powers

of description, for, rushing pell-mell in amongst us, they did their best to get at Mohammad, whilst it required no small amount of activity on our parts always to be between him and them, as they ran and dodged about on all sides, with half-raised guns, trying to get a clear shot at him.

Not being a soldier, and, therefore, never having been in battle or in a life and death skirmish of any kind, I am unable to say at what moment a man so far abandons all thought of personal security as to charge almost cheerfully an enemy bent on his destruction, in the teeth of a murderous fire; but I suppose that, forming but a single item in dense masses of excited comrades on all sides of him, mid the rush of cavalry, and the incessant banging of cannon, self is entirely lost sight of, being swallowed up in the whirling vastness of the scene in which he is acting so small a part.

But the case was different with us—a little knot of travellers *pleasuring* it across the Desert, three of us only carrying firearms, suddenly obliged to withstand in cold blood the unwarrantable attack of fourteen men of war! I must confess that not for a single moment did I so far lose sight of my personal safety as to look cheerfully at death, even for the sake of my dragoman; I felt that it was not fair to

my friends in England, and from the commencement till the close of the contest I wished myself well out of it.

After the first burst of their anger was over, and still Mohammad remained whole and entire, our enemies withdrew a few paces; and then one of them, unslinging a small hatchet from his back, came running forward, swinging it round his head, which, when it had attained sufficient momentum, he threw with all his force right amongst us; but failing to strike its object, it buried itself in the sand behind us. Then another man repeated this manœuvre; but this time with more success, for striking one of our camel-men on the shoulder, it brought him to the ground. Blood having thus been drawn, though not to any serious extent, they seemed slightly pacified, especially as we declared, by means of our friends' dragoon, Salem, that we would certainly avenge the death of any of our party on their chief, who, not seeming to relish the fact of our pointing our guns pertinaciously on him, strove to keep back his men. However, it was not all over yet, for just as we were entering into a second conference, we discovered that Mohammad, who had rashly separated himself from us, was being hotly pursued over the sand towards Jerusalem by the man whom he had pre-

viously kicked, and who now, with a bared scimitar of an enormous length and curve, seemed about to do for him, as our dragoman, being a stout, heavy man, was no match for the Bedouin even in a hundred yards.

Unpleasant as was Mohammad's position, I could hardly refrain from laughing, as I saw him "pounding" over the Desert, his enemy gaining on him every yard. However, as there was no time to be lost, we set off to his assistance; whilst the other Bedouins, thinking the affair was going too far, also ran to try and check their comrade's slaughtering propensities. But fast as we ran, and fast as Mohammad ran, the Bedouin with the scimitar ran faster; and before we could prevent him, he had cut, as it seemed to us, our dragoman's legs off, for down went Mohammad all in a heap, and was on the point of receiving another blow when we arrived to separate them.

This last little *divertissement* concluded, we again endeavoured, by means of Salem, to come to some amicable arrangement; and, after a good deal of talking and spear brandishing, it was finally settled that we should encamp where we were for the night, and go with them before their sheikh on the morrow.

Till a late hour we all sat in one tent discussing the events of the day, and making guesses at the

number of piastres likely to be forced from us before being allowed to go our own ways; but on one point we were all unanimous, that not a single sixpence would we offer them, even should it be the price of instant liberation.

As we thought it quite possible that the Bedouins would enter our tents during the night to see what they could lay their hands on, we each took our turn at mounting guard outside; and notwithstanding the extreme awkwardness of our position, I shall ever remember with pleasure those few moonlight hours, cold and calm, which, succeeding so immediately to the hot, feverish scene in which I had been engaged, proved such a relief as I strolled up and down between the tents.

Our enemies, whose numbers were by this time greatly increased by the frequent arrivals of wandering members of their tribe, had picketted themselves, in groups in a large circle, at some distance around our tents. Each group rejoiced in the light and warmth of a large fire, making their dark faces look doubly fierce as they hung over the flames, vehemently chatting over their day's sport, and indulging in propositions as to our future fate. Every quarter of an hour they fired off one of their long guns, which breaking upon the stillness of the

night, tended in no way to sweeten the repose of our lady friends.

Between four and five o'clock the next morning, being Easter Sunday, we were busily engaged in snatching some breakfast, whilst our servants packed the camels. The Bedouins, who had no other preparation to make for the day's march save rubbing their eyes and mounting their respective dromedaries, were of course ready long before us, and, in the most insulting manner, they shouted to us to be quick, as they pointed to the eastern horizon coloring with the near approach of day.

Whilst my friend and I were draining our coffee cups and lighting up our matutinal cigars, we observed the chief of the hostile party in deep conference with Salem, the result of which he presently communicated to us, as follows: — "Why should there be aught than peace between the inhabitant of the Desert and the dweller in cities? Let him give the poor Bedouin 5000 piastres (equivalent to about 50*l.*), and go on his way without further molestation." As we had no inclination to part with so many of our piastres, we declined this offer; in fact, we had made up our minds, now that the affair had gone so far, to go right through with it, and to see this Desert sheikh whom they talked about.

By the time the sun was up, our caravan, including a vast number of pilgrims, foot travellers to Jerusalem, whom we had picked up on the road, was well "under weigh" — for what particular spot, we were as yet in a happy state of ignorance.

As the sun rose, the heat became intense, till by noon it was well nigh insupportable. Far and wide, on all sides of us, stretched the hot glaring Desert, broken up into innumerable lakes, creeks, and rivers, by reason of the "mirage," — a phenomenon of which I had read so much, and indeed had seen on several occasions, but never in such perfection as to-day. At times the whole expanse of Desert before us seemed to melt away, giving place to a shipless sea, the coast line irregular with numberless promontories and bluff headlands. Stunted shrubs appeared as mighty trees, beneath whose branches we trusted to pass for just one moment of cool shade; but the next minute our disappointment was complete, by seeing them crushed beneath the feet of the camels on which we rode.

But the "mirage" was not only at work with the Desert, but also with our very selves. Was this not Easter Sunday? and had not our friend, a clergyman, proposed, a few day's back, that we should keep it as a holy-day — pitching our tents, giving our men and

camels a day's rest, and listening to his reading of the service? Yet, here had this greatest of all Christian festivals arrived, and instead of the snug encampment surrounded with the camels at rest, which we seemed to have seen so distinctly marked on the horizon before us, we found ourselves launched on a sea of uncertainty, prisoners in the hands of a gang of armed Bedouins, who were leading us whither we knew not.

And so the morning passed; and, when the noon-tide sun had expended all its fierceness upon our captive caravan, we were still being hurried over the hot Desert sands.

Towards sunset, the Bedouins informed us that we were not far from their encampment, and we began to indulge in surmises as to our reception by their sheikh. The ground began to undulate; and soon a few palms, overshadowing small patches of half-choked burnt-up vegetation told us we were approaching the residence of man.

Arrived at the brow of a gentle but extensive slope, a most delicious scene burst upon our view. Accustomed as we had been for the last week to nothing but the unvarying Desert flat, we could not believe our eyes, as we gazed upon the beautiful picture so suddenly spread out before us.

At some distance below the spot where we stood, the interval filled in with trees, shrubs, and underwood of various colours and kinds, lay a fresh water lake. Numerous wild-fowl sat swinging lazily on its mirror-like surface, whilst, not far from the water's edge, among the trees, was the Bedouin encampment to which we were bound, consisting of a few mud huts, and numbers of black canvass tents.

So perplexed had we been, during the heated hours of the day, with the numberless rivers, creeks, and lakes, which had been starting up on all sides of us at every step we took, that it was some time before we could persuade ourselves that this was not a more perfect form of *mirage*. However, after winding down among the acacias and flowering lupins, and approaching so near that we could hear its tiny wavelets breaking upon the shingle, we no longer doubted, but rejoiced exceedingly, and instantly felt equal to anything that might befall us — even death itself, we agreed, would not, after all, be so very bad in such a spot.

As we approached the village, some of our captors rode on ahead of us, and, as we heard afterwards, informed the “sheikh el-belled” (village chief) that Allah in his goodness had enabled them

to take possession of a caravan of "Jews and dogs;" but whether the latter epithet applied to us, or the pilgrims which accompanied us, we were not able, nor did we deem it worth while, to determine. An immense *posse* of women and children came out to greet us, and, as they laughed immoderately and threw stones at us, they tended not a little to increase our vexation.

The first thing to be done, after pitching our tents in this very nest of Bedouins, was to see the sheikh; and notice having been sent us that he was ready to receive us, we left the ladies under the care of one of the dragomen, and, with Mohammad, we repaired to the chief's residence — a capacious mud hut, covered over with straw, at one end of which, on a carpet, surrounded with the principal men of the tribe, he reposed; and a picturesque group indeed they formed in their crimson robes and "kephias," or head dresses, of Damascus silk. On a carpet opposite the sheikh we were motioned to take our seats, and the discussion commenced. At a glance we could see that we were in a fair way of instant liberation (for the sheikh and his advisers were evidently very frightened at the extent to which matters had gone), and that though we had been advertised as "Jews and dogs," it was very

plain that we were English travellers, who had been stopped in the most inexcusable manner, when on their way across the Desert to Jerusalem.

Being called upon by the sheikh to state our grievance, we passed his remark on to Mahommad, who had taken his seat behind us, and whom, now that we turned round to bid him come forward, we found, as it were, stripping for the conference. He had already removed his sabre from his side, kicked off his shoes, and loosened his sash; but as we were in a hurry to commence, he just delayed one moment while he pushed his fez more towards the back of his head, in order to display to greater advantage his copper countenance, burning with just indignation in our behalf; and then, by a series of small jumps, which he performed with a "cork-like buoyancy, quite wonderful in a man of his size and weight," he gained the centre of the hut. With the utmost deliberation, striking his loose bags backwards between his legs, he seated himself on his heels, raised his arms above his head, and calling on Allah to witness the truth of what he was about to say, he streamed forth for the space of a quarter of an hour a host of winged words in proof of the rascally way in which we had been stopped and carried away prisoners; and how that, we being

princes of the blood royal of England, there was no doubt, that if the affair was noised abroad, Her Majesty Queen Victoria would certainly send a great army to exterminate all the Bedouins that breathed !

Mohammad having brought his narration to a close, the men that had captured us were called upon for their story, with which they complied, half-a-dozen always speaking, or rather shouting, at the same time : then Mohammad interrupted them ; then they interrupted Mohammad ; then the sheikh tried to interrupt both ; then the effendi that was noting down all that was said interrupted everybody — altogether it was the most intricate wrangle that it is possible to conceive ; till at length the sheikh, laying his stick on to the shoulders of every one within his reach, and imposing silence, proceeded to give sentence.

He apologized to us for the treatment we had received ; said that his men had exceeded his orders ; that they had stopped us merely in the hope of extorting money ; that he, the sheikh, disapproved of the whole proceeding ; and, finally, assured us that he would send the culprits in irons to Cairo, there to receive punishment at the hands of the Egyptian government.

Everything having been settled in this pleasant manner, at least so far as we were concerned, we made our salaams to the sheikh, and retired to our tents; but not before we had made him promise to allow us an escort of his own men, to ensure our not being stopped again whilst travelling through his territory.

As darkness had already settled over the Desert, we determined to risk passing the night among the Bedouins, as Mohammad assured us that we should be quite safe; for, as he expressed it, the sheikh was evidently an "homme d'esprit," and one who respected us, as being Englishmen and gentlemen.

Placing our pistols beneath our pillows, and attaching our trunks to the tent pole, we went quietly off to sleep, and awoke as usual in perfect safety.

By the time the sun was up, we had breakfasted, and put our caravan once more in motion. Accompanied by the promised escort, and numbers of foot pilgrims, we formed quite a strong party, mustering altogether about fifty men.

We encamped at sunset after a march of eight hours, having had the mountains of Suez on our right all day.

This will show how much we had been taken out of our way; for we ought to have been near the sea coast, and had about as much business with the Suez mountains as with the Himalayahs.

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CHAP. XXI.

EL-ARISH.

ONCE more our own masters, we pushed on fast and cheerfully for Palestine; we had ceased to regard our vagrant life as a novelty, and had as much settled down to it as if we had been at it for years.

The packing and unpacking of our trunks twice a-day was no longer the inconvenience it had been; "man wants but little here below," and we always took care to arrange that "little" uppermost in our portmanteaus. We positively luxuriated in a motion which, when first we mounted our camels, nearly dislocated our whole persons, but which now swayed us gently off to sleep whenever we were so minded. Thanks to our tremendous appetites, we used to dine without complaining, day after day with no variety, upon hashed mutton and maccaroni; in fact, we relished everything except the contents of our water skins; and, notwithstanding all our efforts, we could not even tolerate the water which we carried along with us, and which in the Desert

formed such a very necessary ingredient to our state of perfect happiness. But it was no wonder, for as it became each day more filthy and discoloured, we found it always a little ahead of our efforts to rough it. Bad as it was the first day after drawing it fresh from the well, it was a great deal worse by the next evening, after an exposure of eight hours, in a hot sun, on a camel's back; for it had attained a rich brown colour, and to the taste was very like what I could fancy water might be in which a quantity of boots had been boiled; and therefore so nasty, that in order to drink it we were obliged to put all manner of nice things into it, and then, shutting our eyes and thinking of Soyer, to fancy it a new kind of soup.

The poor pilgrims who followed our caravan drank of it with avidity; and as we had given the dragoman directions to let them have as much as they wanted, so long as our own supply did not run short, we were rejoiced to see that the *potage à la Désert* which we had voted so nasty was appreciated in one quarter at least.

At sunset, on the third day after taking leave of the Bedouins, we encamped in a little oasis beneath some palms, about a mile from a place called Gatiéh; and whilst dinner was preparing, we shouldered our

guns for the chance of a partridge, and walked off to see the remnants of the wall and fortifications that Dr. Robinson speaks of.

They crown the summit of a gentle elevation, and were built by Napoleon I. during his Eastern campaigns, to serve as a link in the chain of communication which he had established between El-Arish, the frontier town of Syria, and Cairo: large mounds and pottery fragments, scattered over a large area, bear silent witness to the size of the ancient town of Cassim, which once existed here.

Close to the wall before alluded to is a large well, which was sunk by Mohammad Ali, for the use of the caravans passing between Syria and Egypt; and on the summit of a sand hill is a handsome tomb of an Arab Saint.

On the day after leaving Gatiéh we were to pass, according to our charts, the spot where once flowed Gihor, "the river of Egypt;" and about noon we certainly did cross what appeared to be the bed of a river long since dry. But as the term "river of Egypt" would seem to refer to the Nile, whence came "a revenue in harvests," we passed away an hour, after our day's march, disputing as to the correctness of our maps; but coming, after much talk, to no very definite conclusion, we dropped the

subject until we should arrive at the river of El-Arish, which we knew was another candidate for the title "river of Egypt."

We were now travelling onwards in the hope every day of seeing the sea, from which we made out we could not be very far distant; and on the morning of *April 1st*, having reached some high table-land, the blue expanse of the Mediterranean appeared on our left, distant some three or four miles. Remembering the date, we refrained from immediate rejoicing, until we were quite certain of its reality—just balancing in our minds the possibility of its being "mirage."

At night we encamped at a considerable elevation; and sitting after dinner in our tent-doors, with our coffee and chibouques, we gazed upon the ocean-like Desert stretching far away southwards, in one vast, unbroken plain, to the bases of the blue mountains of Akaba. The whole scene, steeped in the deepening purple of sunset, was completely divested of the barren and desolate appearance which it otherwise would have had; and, as we dreamed over our pipes, the ever invisible, but constantly heard, desert bells sounding faintly in the distance, we were almost inclined to doubt the fact of our being so far away from green trees and civilisation.

As darkness crept over the Desert, we were enabled to distinguish the camp-fires of another party, at a great distance off in the plain below ; but being uncertain whether they belonged to travellers like ourselves, or to Bedouins, we gave orders to keep our own fires low for fear of attracting their attention.

During the night it rained heavily, and blew "great guns." Nor was the sweetness of my repose enhanced by being awake, a little after midnight, with the canvass sides of the tent flapping and banging on my face. After shouting to Mohammad for about half an hour—for I had no idea of turning out myself in the cold—I managed to make him understand that our house was on the point of forsaking us, when he got up, and, with the help of the camel-men, put matters right again.

The first streak of daylight saw us striking our tents, and putting our caravan in motion for El-Arish, for we had a long day's march in prospect, and we wished to make the most of the cool morning hours. Before starting, we directed our glasses down into the plain, in order to arrive at the meaning of the fires which we had seen on the previous evening, and found, to our satisfaction, that they had proceeded from an encampment of travellers such

as we were, and whose long, serpent-like caravan was now winding over the Desert in the direction of Palestine.

Towards the middle of the day, having both been, as it were, travelling along opposite sides of the same triangle, we met at the apex; and, after firing our guns into the air by way of salutation, we joined forces, and journeyed on towards El-Arish in company.

During the afternoon, we came upon a large salt lake, which it was necessary to cross, in order to shorten our day's march. Our poor camels, already taxed beyond their powers of endurance, by reason of the unusually soft nature of the sand over which they had been toiling since an early hour, were hardly in condition for the attempt; for a camel, the instant you take him off the sand, is considerably more awkward than a duck out of water. But if you not only take him off the sand, but bid him cross a sheet of water, though not more than a foot in depth in any one part, yet, with the bottom as smooth and slippery as ice, I must confess that, vulgarly speaking, "you hardly do your rights by him."

The advance part of our caravan, consisting of the camels belonging to the Americans and Prussians,

had already commenced their hazardous undertaking when we arrived. Nor were our notions of the facility of transit indulged in any longer, when we saw that one of the camels (I suppose a weak one, or one more heavily laden than the others), had slipped down and broken its leg. After in vain trying to raise it again, the Arabs began to remove its burden ; and the lamenting of the poor animal, as they removed each article of baggage, preparatory to leaving it behind, was truly piteous. Of course, having broken its leg, it was of no further use to us, and it would have been impossible to have carried him along with us. As it was evidently in great pain, we wished to shoot it at once ; but one of the men promising to remain behind, to perform this last sad duty, we proceeded on our journey, and arriving all of us in safety at the further side, we pushed on to El-Arish.

The approach to El-Arish is among an infinity of sand-hills, some of which are so steep that, in descending them, I fully expected my camel's own weight would prove too much for the strength of his fore legs, and that he would fall on his nose, inevitably pitching me over his head. However, without any such catastrophe, after a ride of ten hours and a half, we pitched our tents beneath the walls

of the frontier town, which, for a place not likely ever to see much of a siege, is strongly fortified.

Here the baggage of all our camel-men and some Jews, who formed part of our caravan, was submitted to a strict examination by the Egyptian custom-house officers, though ours, by the wholesome administration of a small *buchsheesh*, was exempt.

On reviewing our forces, we found that four camels had dropped by the way from sheer fatigue, and had been left as food for vultures; whilst, of the large body of foot pilgrims who had accompanied us from Cairo, several were missing. We were assured that Allah would take care of them, and bring them all safely to Jerusalem; but, unless by the intervention of some divine miracle, I much fear that the poor fellows, who had left their homes and families far away in India, and the furthest East, to do homage at the shrines of Mecca and the Holy City, found their last resting-places in the Desert. So frequent must be the instances of pilgrims who never find their way home again, that one does not know how sufficiently to admire the devotion which they bear to their God and creed, in thus forsaking all, and going forth in thousands, year after year, to almost certain death.

On inquiring whether the camel, which we had left in the salt lake with the broken leg, had been despatched as promised, we were perfectly astounded to hear that he had been left to die of famine and in pain. The only excuse they gave was, "That it was the will of Allah; that it was fated this camel should die of hunger and a broken leg; and," as one of the men said, "rather would I shoot myself than, by shooting the camel, alter the course of fate."

After we had dined, we addressed a note to the American gentlemen, asking them to pipes and coffee in our tent, but received their regrets "that a previous engagement would prevent them accepting our kind invitation," as their Prussian friends were going to partake of brandy and water and "gin sling" in their tent: however, they hoped that we would bring our chibouques and "cut in" with them. So accordingly, having sent our pipes on before, we followed presently in the wake of the portly Mo-hammad bearing a fanoose.

As we anticipated, we spent a most uproarious evening over the aforesaid decoction of hot water, gin, and lemon-peel; and the almost brotherly terms which the Americans were on with the four Prussian Counts at once surprised and amused us, "sweet

converse" being quite out of the question, since neither understood the other's language: indeed, Arabic was the only language common to both, and of that but *one* word was known to either. Need I tell any Eastern traveller, that that word was "Taib!" (Good!)

We arrived first at the Americans' tent this evening, so were witnesses to their mode of saluting the Prussians, which was as follows: —

The tent door being drawn aside to admit them, the four continental Counts entered, first removing their hats as they gave us "*Bon soir.*" "Hilloa!" shouted our jovial Americans, "here you are! how d'ye get along? sit down." "*Je vous remercie mille fois,*" answered the Prussians in chorus. Here came a pause; for though the Americans looked excessively happy themselves, and seemed disposed to render their guests so also, they were not able to express their ideas except by a series of gymnastics, which, though they eventually succeeded, was a work of time.

However, the table, loaded with sundry black bottles, cigars, and a large jug of hot water, backed by the truly hospitable countenances of our entertainers, took less time to explain the order of the evening than did their well-meant dumb motions,

and numerous ejaculations of the *one* word "Taib!" I was completely non-plussed at the very commencement of the evening by the senior of the two Americans, who, in pressing the contents of the black bottles upon his guests, turned to me to render "gin sling" in French. As I was unable to assist him, he resorted to his own method, which was by collecting the several ingredients of this delightful compound, and pushing them across the table, 'mid a perfect volley of "Taibs." But, as I said before, we managed some how to spend a most sociable evening. The "gin sling" was voted the only thing worth drinking, the cigars the only "weeds" worth smoking, albeit they came from the "far West," and were tremendously large and tremendously strong; and we all talked a great deal; and the Prussians said something that the Americans didn't understand, and the Americans said something that the Prussians didn't understand; and then they laughed heartily at some joke that had never been made—for they could not have laughed at what had been said, since neither understood what the other had been talking about. And so the evening passed away; and towards midnight we retired to our several tents, the Americans declaring to us, in an under tone, that the Prussians were "no end of bricks;" whilst they

on their side expressed this affection for the Americans, " Mon Dieu, ces Américains ! mais ils sont charmants garçons ! "

Before leaving El-Arish, we sent Mohammad to the governor of the town, with the letter from the Cadi at Belbeys concerning the lost watch, and were soon after waited upon by one of his rawasses to request our attendance.

Squeezing our way through the bazaars, we arrived presently at the house of his Excellency. A knot of pipe-bearers and soldiers made way for us to pass, ushering us immediately into the audience chamber—by no means a magnificent one.

At the further end of the room, on a low mud-built divan, running all round, reclined the governor, surrounded with his effendis and learned men. Having made our salaams, we took our seats on his right; and Mohammad having squatted on his heels immediately in front, we spent the next few minutes in silence, sipping the coffee and puffing the pipes which were offered us. Without entering into the details of all that passed, I shall content myself with saying, that notwithstanding all the wise suggestions of the effendis, the governor found it impossible to render us any immediate assistance in the matter, but promised to lay violent hands on any suspicious-

looking individual that arrived in the town from Belbeys, and held out hopes that the next month or two would see my friend in possession of his stolen property. His Excellency then went on to say that, since my friend had lost his watch, the key belonging to it could be of no further use to him; and that as he also possessed a watch, the wondrous dimensions of which he took this little opportunity of displaying for our admiration, he would feel obliged by my friend presenting him with his key, to supply the place of one which he had lost some months back. Accordingly, the same evening my friend sent up his key, which certainly was of no further use to him, since he now saw little chance of ever recovering the watch to which it belonged.

CHAP. XXII.

PALESTINE.

WE were now in Syria, and though not quite clear of the Desert, our eyes were continually relieved by broad stretches of grass-land, which, to us, seemed deliciously bright and green.

On the second day from El-Arish, we passed, in the early morning, a spot marked in our maps as Rephía, where two simple granite pillars informed us that we stood on the boundary line between Asia and Africa. And now, in truth, I voted myself a rapid traveller, as, with a short preparatory run, and unassisted by any winged Pegasus, or any of those locomotive carpets one reads about in the "Arabian Nights," I leaped in a moment of time from one continent to the other.

In early days, when first one went to school, and was lectured by one's tutor, from the pages of "Arrowsmith," upon the relative positions of Asia and Africa; and when the extent of one's topographical knowledge associated aught that was Asiatic with the streets of Ispahan, or the far-off

plains of Siberia; and aught that was African with the mud-huts of Hottentots, or the jungles of Caffre-land—in those days I little thought that the time would come when, during a *morning's ride*, I should pass from one great quarter of the globe to another—yet so it was.

Soon after losing sight of Rephía, a sudden descent took us into the village of Khân-Younes; and as our caravan wound down among its gardens and groves of prickly pear, the atmosphere laden with the odour of the sweet lupin, it gave us, as Eöthen so happily observed, quite the sensation of bathing, coming so suddenly out of the hot, arid Desert into the midst of such a bouquet; and we appreciated in a slight degree what must have been the feelings of the Israelites on first entering the promised land, after their forty years' sojourn in the Desert.

Into a small plot of ground in the centre of the village, surrounded with a wooden paling, we were turned, whilst a couple of guardians took us into custody, preparatory to seeing us all safely imprisoned in quarantine at Gaza. After waiting here for about half an hour, our caravan once more streamed forth upon the park-like plain which intervenes between these towns. Our exit was not

a triumphal one, but, like a plague-stricken troop, we marched slowly and mournfully along. Guards before and guards behind marshalled us onwards, ever and anon shouting to distant children, playing in the road, to flee from us, and to the women, to get them into their houses whilst we passed; and in every way treating us as if we had been one and all in the last stage of an autumn Cairene plague. Joke and laugh as we might, we could not but feel that we were about the most wicked, sinful people on the face of the earth.

At sunset we arrived at our quarantine quarters, outside the town of Gaza. The prison gates were opened to receive us, and, when the last of our caravan had wound into the desolate court-yard, they were closed heavily upon us, and we were requested to consider ourselves under arrest for the next five days.

For the next hour we were in a state of the greatest confusion, unpacking the camels, and each one selfishly, but openly, striving to select the cleanest-looking cell for himself. However, before it was quite dark, we had managed to shake down as comfortably as could be expected, taking into consideration the positively filthy state of our new quarters. Free as we were then from anything like

plague, we were all seriously of opinion that the next five days would about "do for us," or else that we should be let out of quarantine, carrying along with us the seeds of contagion.

The form of the quarantine quarters at Gaza reminded me very much of an English cattle-market—*viz.*, four high stone walls, enclosing several rows of sheds, or rather cells, at right angles to each other, making a square, with a well in the centre. At one corner, and a little apart from the cells allotted to us, were the quarters of the "medico," an Italian doctor in charge of the quarantine, consisting of a few consecutive apartments on the ground floor, with a small wooden paling and a few shrubs in front. Even this residence had a melancholy, half-starved appearance, but was certainly seen to advantage when contrasted with the surrounding buildings.

Insupportable as were the long, tedious hours of the day, night brought us no relief—sleep visited not the pillows of the wretched inmates of the Gaza quarantine; for the countless "B flats," and myriads of fleas, with which the walls and floors of our cells were alive during the day, seemed all to assert equal claims to a share of the beds, which we fondly fancied were intended only for us.

On the evening of the last day in quarantine we were all ordered out into the court-yard, and, being drawn up in line, the "medico" advanced to the front, and, after a few preliminary questions addressed to each on the state of his or her health, the word was given to "Show tongues," which we accordingly did, in a manner that would have led any one ignorant of quarantine regulations to suppose that we were all expressing the most profound contempt for the poor medico.

At sunrise the next morning, to our great joy, we cleared out of quarantine; and bidding Mo-hammad meet us on the further side of the town with the camels and horses—for my friend and I had hired animals of the latter class to carry us to Jerusalem—we strolled with one of the other dragomen through the bazaars of Gaza.

Independently of the great Scriptural interest attached to this town, as one of the five Philistine cities, Gaza as it now stands is an exceedingly beautiful town, surrounded with large olive plantations, and dense groves of pomegranate and lemon trees. By far the larger portion of it is built of stone, which, when compared with other second-class Eastern towns, gives it a very imposing appearance. Nor is the interior so disappointing as

is often the case in Syria, for, being on the high road for caravans passing from Beyrout and Damascus to the Suez and Cairo markets, its bazaars are at all times well filled, and rich in all kinds of merchandise. A hill to the east of the town was pointed out to us as the spot to which Samson carried the gates on the night of his escape.

Leaving Gaza behind us, we now rode on through a rich country towards Askelon, passing, in about two hours from the time of starting, the brook Escol. The modern Askelon is only a small village, to the north of the site of the old town, almost within reach of the waves of the Mediterranean, and prettily imbedded in a grove of olive and date trees. As we intended pitching our tents at Ashdod, or Sdoud, so called by the Arabs, we sent on the camels, whilst we remained to partake of lunch amid the ruins of the old town.

Its traces are so faded and scattered as scarcely to be noticed, and all our attentions were devoted to some lofty stone walls and fast-decaying fortifications, of the date of the Crusades, situated on some high ground immediately overhanging the sea. After remaining here for an hour or so, wandering about in the shade of the numerous trees, which cast their cool reflection upon the old grey walls, we

continued our ride to Ashdod, where we arrived a little before sunset. Of the ancient town there are little or no traces remaining.

We pitched our tents upon a grassy knoll close to the Arab village, whence we had a delightful view over the plain towards Askelon and the sea. Whilst we were at dinner, some friends of the dragoman came out of the village, to tell us to be sure and keep a strict watch during the night ; for that a few hours previously, at a distance only of a few miles, a great battle had taken place between two hostile Bedouin tribes, and that marauders would surely be about.

On receiving this information, we sent up a request to the sheikh of the village, to be provided with a sufficient guard to prevent our being robbed ; but the good man, not liking to give occasion to either of the hostile parties to find fault with him, politely declined ; his excuse being, " that the well-known bravery of Europeans would surely enable them to take care of themselves ! "

It was on occasions of this kind, when Mohammad knew from experience that there was no real danger to anticipate, that his great pluck showed itself. Accordingly, the last thing at night, just as we were on the point of putting our lights out and

getting into bed, he appeared at the tent door—his Bagdad capote folded round him, his head tied up in a handkerchief, and his loaded carbine under his arm, giving him very much the appearance of a Ramsgate bathing-woman about to embark on foreign service—and stated his intention of watching over the safety of the camp till the sun rose.

To prove his zeal in our behalf, he used to bother us for the first hour with challenging all the dogs and jackalls that came near the tents, and frequently blazing away with his carbine; but this only lasted for an hour, and then he used to go to sleep, which apparent neglect of his duty we never said anything about, as it enabled us to follow his example.

The next day being Sunday, we had intended remaining encamped; but as, at an early hour, the Sdoudites commenced crowding round our tents, and we feared their being seized with too irresistible a passion to appropriate some of our effects, we packed our camels and went on our journey to Jerusalem.

Having so lately disembarked from our Desert voyage, the extreme beauty and fertility of the country that we rode through, after leaving Ashdod, taxed our powers of appreciation almost too severely; and, not content with regarding it from my saddle,

I allowed my horse to wander where he chose among the camels, whilst I lingered on foot far behind the caravan, walking wherever the grass was tallest, picking whatever flowers were fairest, and resting at odd moments under any tree the dense foliage of which was an excuse for day-dreaming.

Late in the afternoon we entered quite a Saxon forest of holm-oak, through which we continued to ride for nearly an hour; nor was it until the shadows of the trees on either side of us lay lengthening along the glades, that we caught sight of the white walls and minarets of Ramlah.

Passing on our left a very beautiful tower of Saracenic architecture, marked in our maps as the "Martyr's Tower," we rode round to the south side of the town, where we encamped on a sort of common, without furze bushes, for the night. Here, also, as at Ashdod, we were advised to keep a good watch, as some English travellers, who had pitched their tents four days previously in the same spot, had had them cut into during the night, and a considerable amount of property stolen.

Bad as this news sounded at first, our spirits very soon rose again, when we considered how decidedly adverse the chances were to such an event occurring again for some time. The next morning, as soon as

we had finished breakfast, we mounted our horses, intending to employ the day in a visit to the town of Joppa, or, as it is now called, Jaffa.

Leaving Ramlah, riding in a north-westerly direction, we skirted the plain of Sharon, which lay stretched out before us bright with the morning sun, and perfectly crimson with the countless poppies which grew in the springing corn. An hour's ride brought us to the small town of Lydda, in the Arab tongue Ludd. Here we saw a handsome tomb, which the inhabitants informed us contained the bones of St. George the champion of Christendom; they would also have us believe that he was born here, notwithstanding the strong claims that Cappadocia urges to having cradled him in infancy.

Striking across the plain seawards, we entered Jaffa at noon; and forcing a passage for our horses along its narrow and crowded streets, we made our way to the house of our Consul, Assad-el-Kayat, a Syrian, but a man of some little note, and who for many years has held this office under our Government. The Consul himself, we were sorry to find, had gone to Jerusalem on business; but his brother received and entertained us most kindly. His house faces the sea, and joins on, or is very close, to the Armenian Convent, which served Napoleon I. for a

hospital, and where was enacted that dreadful tragedy — the poisoning its sick and wounded inmates by wholesale. The Consul's house is furnished in the European fashion, the room in which we sat being lighted by means of a bow-window, immediately overlooking the small and incommodious port of Jaffa. After our long ride, we were glad of a few minutes' rest on his divans, and of an opportunity of refreshing ourselves with the coffee which was offered us.

Our host placed himself at our disposal, to show us all that would be likely to interest us in Jaffa. First, he procured us admission into the convent before alluded to; then, mounting higher up into the town, he took us into an antiquated but very wretched house, and, bidding us look around, to say whether we saw anything remarkable. On our obeying his instructions, and then answering in the negative, he said, "This is the very house which belonged to Simon the tanner, and where tarried for certain days St. Peter." As we saw no reason for disbelieving so probable a fact, we were induced to leave the house with more reverential feelings than we had on entering; though I must confess that it pleased me more to think I was in the self-same town where, beyond a doubt, St. Peter lived, than

standing in the room about which there was merely a tradition as to its having been the lodging of the Apostle.

The town of Jaffa is very imposingly built on a promontory of some elevation, surrounded with orange and pomegranate groves of almost tropical luxuriance. Fortunately for us, our visit happened to be made on a market day; and outside the walls of the town, shaded by numerous acacias, had been erected long rows of gaily-colored booths. Merchants of all classes added their voices to the general hubbub, eloquent in praise of their own wares. Here you might expend a few piastres in native fruits — there as many pounds in horses. The seller of sherbets rattled his brass cups, as he passed from group to group, setting forth in a stentorian voice *but half the real price* of his lemon, sugar, and water mixture.

After our three weeks of Desert solitude, such a scene of noise and excitement proved nearly too much for us; but at last we managed to tear ourselves away, and, mounting our horses, we retraced our road to Ramlah.

I shall never forget the exquisitely delightful ride we had back to our encampment, across the plain of Sharon. The sun, as it sank towards the Western horizon, threw a flood of light and color over the

whole country far and near, making equally distinct the ears of corn and poppies of Sharon, and the distant crags of the mountains of Judæa. We were not sorry to arrive at length at our encampment, our appetites sharpened by our long day's ride.

Ali, the dragoman who had accompanied us to Jaffa, whose horse had not been quite in such good condition as ours even at the commencement of the day, and who had been obliged to drop behind, rode into the camp whilst we were chatting outside the tents, waiting for dinner. His poor animal showed such evident signs of distress that we all gathered round to pity it. Its owner, a native of Ramlah, who formed one of the circle, was so vexed that his horse had not acquitted itself creditably, that, to our surprise and disgust, and before we could prevent him, he drew the sword which hung at his side, and, swinging it over his head, brought it down edge-ways on to the horse's back with such force that he made a gash of an inch and a half at least in length. I have no doubt that he would have repeated this atrocious act of cruelty if we had allowed him, and fortunate it was for the poor creature that we were so near. Our indignation was unbounded, and mustering all the Arabic of which we were masters, we expended it in abusing to the utmost of our

power this unwarrantable exhibition of anger, and finished by asking him in English, "Where he thought he was likely to go to?"

Happy as is the average existence of an Arab horse, he is ever subject to these savage attacks at the hands of his Moslem owner; and though without number are the romantic tales which delight us in England of the affection shown to animals in the East, yet, in the face of them all, I am inclined to think that, if the chance was given to any experienced sensible old Arab horse of exchanging his lot with an English roadster, and commencing life again, there would be little doubt of his availing himself of it.

CHAP. XXIII.

JERUSALEM.

So far had we come with our camels; but we now bade them adieu, for henceforward, till the end of our journey, our tents and baggage were to be carried by mules. It was like parting with old friends. But whatever sorrow was felt on the occasion was on our side: *they* must have been only too pleased to be quit of the trees and flowers of Palestine, and to be on their way back to their beloved Desert; so we watched them departing, burdenless, in long file from the walls of Ramlah, till they were quite out of sight, almost regretting that they moved so gaily and pleasantly away from us. From Ramlah to Jerusalem it is one day's journey; and seeing that the mules which had been promised us at some dismal anti-sunrise hour this morning had not made their appearance (as indeed we had expected) by the time we had finished breakfast, towards nine o'clock, we mounted our horses, and taking one of the dragomen with us, left Mohammad to follow when he

could; as, if we failed to arrive at the Holy City before sunset, we should find the gates closed for the night — and a lodging on the cold ground till sunrise the next morning, even on the Mount of Olives or in the valley of Jehoshaphat, we hardly thought desirable.

The first part of our ride lay across a wide plain, bounded towards the east by the long rugged chain of the mountains of Judæa, upon the further side of which we knew the Holy City lay. For some days past their broken summits, purpled by distance, had intercepted all further glimpses into Palestine; but now that we were fast approaching them, and could even discern the bushes and brakes which filled the clefts in their rocky sides, how fraught with interest became the very road we were following, and which a few miles on was lost to view among their defiles!

In talking of the Holy Land I have been charged by some of my friends with “pumping up” an amount of enthusiasm I did not really feel. Without denying the charge, I can only say, that if I could have “pumped up” a little more than I did, during that ride among the mountains of Judæa, and when at every turn of the road we thought to catch sight of the minarets of Jerusalem, I would have done so gladly, so sure am I that all the happiness I felt

on the occasion would, if possible, have been enhanced.

At noon we entered the first defiles of the mountains, considerably to the south-west of Ramlah; and toiling during four hot sultry hours continuously up among their rocky gorges, we passed, about four o'clock, the little village of Emmaus, which hung to the mountain side, almost hidden from view among its olive and orange groves.

Certain now that our day's journey was drawing to a close, we all became anxious as to who should be the first to see the Holy City; and the road only admitting of our riding in single file, each one might have been detected endeavouring to distract the other's attention to something quite unworthy of notice in the rear, so as to put his own horse into the leading place. But as we rode on, gaining hill-top after hill-top, and still there was yet another hill-top on beyond, our heads literally ached with excitement, till, a little before sunset, all our expectations were set at rest by turning a shoulder of the mountain, and finding ourselves almost within a stone's throw of its castellated walls.

Up to this point I had been actuated by all those feelings which any one sitting at home in England, planning a tour through the Holy Land, would natu-

rally perceive pervading his mind at the thought of loitering morning after morning in the bright sunshine of the East among those spots, and gazing upon those scenes, which must have been so familiar to the Saviour of the world; but now that I am once more at home, thinking over a tour which I have concluded instead of planning, I am quite clear in saying, that on the very instant of my coming in sight of Jerusalem they all dispersed themselves, nor was I again under their influence, except at very rare intervals, during my residence in Palestine.

All the way from Emmaus I had been striving to realise the fact of my riding over the same ground so often traversed by our Lord; and I trust to my reader's imagination, more than to any words of mine, to form a due estimate of the manner in which that mysterious awe, which for some hours past had been taking hold of our minds, was so completely violated by the sudden appearance of three or four "hotel-touters," who, whilst the words, "There is Jerusalem!" were still warm on our lips, rushed from various hiding-places upon us, and flourishing large printed cards in our faces, set forth in wretched English the peculiar advantages of the several hotels to which they belonged. It was no use our declining their services, they were as obstinately anxious to

direct our choice of lodgings, as any little London vagabond is to bear the weight of the parcel you have a fancy to carry in your hand instead of your pocket.

Putting ourselves at last, from the purest motives of self-defence, under the guidance of the most respectable of the "touters," we entered the city through the Jaffa gate, situated at the head of the Valley of Gihon; and passing the open space in front of the old towers of Hippicus, where was a motley assemblage of pilgrims, horses, and baggage-mules, and descending for a short distance a steep and very noisy street, risking our horses' knees at every step, we took the first turning to the left, below the Pool of Hezekiah, and soon after dismounted at the door of Mr. Hauser's Mediterranean Hotel.

As in Cairo you engage a dragoman, so in Jerusalem your first thought is for a guide, whose business it is—no matter whether he be Christian or Mus-sulman—to have all the points of interest connected with the Holy City at his fingers' ends. It so chanced that the man who applied to us, as we sat at breakfast the morning after our arrival, for a situation was a Christian. But as there are almost as many different classes of Christians in Jerusalem as there are sects of Protestants in London, perhaps

it will be as well to add that he was a Latin Catholic, by name Giuseppe.

Considering how numerous are the detailed descriptions of Jerusalem at present before the public, I have not the least intention of trespassing upon my readers' time, by attempting what so many abler men have done before I was in existence—to say nothing of a topographical account of the city being mainly interesting to those only who are actually on the spot, or who have but just returned with the ruined palace of Herod, or the house of Santa Veronica, still vividly present to their minds' eye.

Following Giuseppe's guidance down the shady side of the Via Dolorosa, stopping every dozen yards, as one would do in a picture gallery, to do little more than glance at a spot which ought to have been invested in our minds, as Christian travellers, with the deepest interest, we made our exit, on the east side of the city, through St. Stephen's Gate, in the shade of which a small knot of Turkish soldiers, their muskets left to take care of themselves in a corner, lay stretched on the ground, playing at draughts.

Standing beneath the old wall of the Temple, and looking across the deep Valley of Jehoshaphat, which sweeps southwards far below the city, our eyes fell

upon the Mount of Olives, rising abruptly before us. At its foot, on the further side of the Brook Kidron, lay the Garden of Gethsemane, its extent marked out by a low stone wall, enclosing eight aged olive trees, which tradition fondly asserts to be the very ones which witnessed our Saviour's agony on the night before His crucifixion.

Descending the steep side of Mount Moriah, and crossing over the Brook Kidron by means of a small bridge hard by the chapel erected over the tomb of the Virgin, we presently bent our heads as we passed through the low arched doorway which leads into Gethsemane. Long before I had seen this garden, which of all spots in or about Jerusalem I had thought would interest me the most, I had formed not only a pleasing, but what I believed to be a true notion of its character, from that pretty sketch which Mr. Bartlett gives in his "Walks about Jerusalem."

To say that I was disappointed, hardly expresses the exact state of mind in which I saw Gethsemane with my own instead of Mr. Bartlett's eyes.

Had it not been for the fact of my having just descended Mount Moriah and crossed over the Brook Kidron, I could have fancied myself standing, during the Dog Days, in the kitchen garden of a bran new villa at the back of Torquay, or any other of our

English watering-places, the peculiarities of which are, I dare say, familiar to most of my readers—viz. four hot glaring walls, at the bases of which runs a bed of dry pebbly mould in which nothing ever grows, a few paths at right angles to each other, composed of loose shifting gravel which will never bind, and in the centre three or four apple trees, which seldom, if ever, bear any fruit. In attendance upon the eight olive trees, which attract the traveller's attention by their ancient and desolate appearance, is a Franciscan monk, who spends his time in watering the rose trees which cling to their gnarled trunks, and in receiving the few piastres which of course you put into his outstretched hand as he ushers you out of Gethsemane.

A short and not very precipitous climb brings you to the summit of the Mount of Olives, whence you have by far the most imposing and complete view of Jerusalem.

Surrounded by a chain of mountains, the Holy City rises proudly up from amongst them. All traces of its decay and desolation are lost in distance. Its mass of houses with their countless domes, and the numerous minarets and towers which are seen spiring up in all directions, give it a truly picturesque appearance.

Immediately below us, occupying the site of the Temple, lay the Haram-el-Shereef, with its charming gardens and melancholy cypresses ; and, in the centre, the magnificent Mosque of Omar, its emerald walls resplendent with a flood of sunlight. More distant, rose the mighty cupola and domes of the Sepulchre Church and the massive tower of Hippicus ; while, to the left, we could see David's tower on Zion, and, near to it, the Armenian Church of St. James, and the glistening turrets of the New Protestant Church. To the north, in a wide circle, we could discern the mountains of Ephraim, with Ebal and Gerizim—the mounts whence blessing and cursing were proclaimed ; while all the country to the south was occupied by the hills of Judah. Nor is the eastern view less beautiful, though totally devoid of life. Over a confused mass of barren mountain peaks our eyes wandered, far away over the Desert of Quarantana*, to the intensely blue waters of the Dead Sea ; above which, to the east, towered massively, like some huge wall, the mountains of Moab—whence Moses, upon Nebo, directed his gaze over the Promised Land. The plains of Jericho, through which flows the Jordan—its course

* In this Desert our Saviour is said to have spent the period of His temptation.

to the Dead Sea marked by a long line of foliage, which fringes its banks on either side—were seen in all their extent to the left.

By the time we reached our hotel we had visited, if Giuseppe was to be believed, pretty nearly all the places, with the exception of those beneath the roof of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, mentioned in the New Testament. It almost seemed as if, in the grouping of them so closely together, the convenience of succeeding generations had been studied; for instance, pausing in one part of the Via Dolorosa, our guide, clearing his throat, said, “You see this building, Sir? This was the palace of Herod! This is where St. Peter made his denial!—that (pointing with his finger to a spot a few yards in advance) is where the cock crew!—this house belonged to Santa Veronica, who offered the napkin—now shown at Rome on Good Fridays—to our Lord as he passed on his way to Calvary!—and just there, Sir, is where Simon the Cyrenian was compelled to bear the cross!”

A few steps farther on he drew our attention to two very antiquated buildings, and astonished us by asserting that the one to the left belonged to Lazarus, whilst the other, on which still remained traces of red paint, had been the residence of Dives;

and, for the first time in our lives, we perceived that the beggar had been equally well lodged with his wealthy neighbour. He was not at all perplexed by the fact of these two characters having been introduced in a parable, nor when we told him that Lazarus was only spoken of as lying at the rich man's gate. The former difficulty he overcame by saying that our Lord, whilst uttering the parable, had stood in this spot, taking the two houses in question as examples; and, as to the latter objection, he was inclined to doubt that two mere travellers could be better informed than one who had been born and bred on the spot!

Whatever laudable plans the generality of travellers may have sketched out in their own minds as to the disposal of their time whilst in Jerusalem, and whilst they are still under the influence of those feelings of holy romance which take possession of all on their first entry into Palestine—once in the Holy City, they find themselves plunged, *nolens volens*, into the regular routine of sight-seeing, and are hurried along with the stream. First day, Via Dolorosa and the Mount of Olives; second day, Church of the Sepulchre and Mosque of Omar; third day, a ride round the exterior of the City; and so on till their guide informs them that they have finished Jeru-

saalem, and must now give way to the newly-arrived batch of travellers, whose tinkling mules are crowding close to the steps of Mr. Hauser's hotel, and who may be heard engaging the rooms you are expected to vacate on the morrow.

The same Americans who had treated us so gloriously at El-Arish, boasted to me, on a subsequent occasion, that they had "done" Jerusalem in three days; a feat which they had accomplished by rising each morning before sunrise, and working hard all day. But in them perhaps it was excusable, as their intention was to "get along" through Italy and Greece, and be back in New York before the moons of another two months had waxed and waned.

The moment we were enabled to dispense with the services of our guide we did so; and managing to keep the landlord in a good humour with us, we spent a few days in real enjoyment, rambling leisurely in the environs of the city. But the feverish state of excitement in which we had *lionized* during the first two or three days had brushed all the bloom from our visit; nor could we afterwards find it possible to realise any of that enthusiasm with which we had hoped to have been filled whilst Jerusalem was yet in the future.

From the street in which the hotel is situated,

a short passage, for foot passengers only, lined on either side with the shops of dealers in relics and antiquities, conducts the traveller into a species of piazza or paved square.

During the Jerusalem season, or, in other words, during that period immediately preceding and subsequent to the celebration of the Greek Easter, this square, one side of which is entirely occupied by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is the focus of all the noise and bustle of the city.

The pavement is so covered with the wares of the numerous vendors of all manner of holy curiosities, that, in order to cross from one side to the other, the traveller is obliged, for every three direct steps in advance, to make two either to the right or left and sometimes backwards. Large heaps of rosaries oppose him in every direction. Beads from Mecca, shells from Bethlehem, and chaplets of amber are thrust in his face at every step. Pilgrims of all kinds and in every variety of costume, from the high-crowned conical hat of the Persian dervish, and the white burnoose of the swarthy Bedouin, to the unpretending paletôt and broad wide-awake of the sandy-haired German, are to be heard descanting in loud tones upon the approaching Easter. Knots of Turkish soldiers pretend to preserve order

by bullying all around them. The atmosphere is hot and heavy with the clouds of incense which escape all day from the open doors or windows of the Church; whilst, above all the din and noise outside, can be heard the roll of the organ, accompanying the chaunting of the priests as they engage in the continual round of services within. Such is the daily character of the scene in the court-yard before the doors of the Holy Sepulchre Church at Easter!

Except that he escapes for a time from the sun's glare, the traveller finds, on entering the church, that he has only left one scene of crowded excitement for another. Here are no idle loiterers, all have some object in view; and without any warning of "by your leave," he is pushed here and there and everywhere, with immense difficulty making his way from one part of the sacred edifice to another. Wherever he turns his eyes he sees enthusiastic Hadjis kneeling, bowing, kissing, and lighting tapers. Action of some kind is the order of the day with all save himself.

Carried along with the crush, he enters the small marble chapel erected beneath the great dome of the church over our Lord's Sepulchre. As there is only room for three or four at a time, and as no one makes even a show of giving way to another,

the reader may well imagine the difficulty with which he squeezes himself in for just one glance at the sacred tomb.

Leaving the circular church, he then passes into the large chapel allotted to the Greeks, by far the most splendid and most gorgeously decorated of any within the precincts of the whole building. In the centre of this chapel he will most probably observe, as I did, a crowd of pilgrims collected round an object affording them intense interest; and on edging his way through them, he will find them engaged in bending the knee to and kissing the half of a globe raised above the marble pavement. Round this semi-spherical substance is drawn a black line with a spot over the centre; and if he ask the meaning of it, he will be told that it marks the exact centre of the world, and as such is revered accordingly.

Not likely to betray his ignorance by hinting at the possibility of any other spot being situated over the centre of a world which he has ever been taught to consider as round, he will say nothing, but gaze mysteriously upon the object in question, as if for the first, and perhaps the last, time in his life he was standing immediately over the exact centre of the world!

After paying visits to all the most interesting

points of the church, and wandering for a time among the numerous arched corridors and vaulted chambers which lead on all sides from beneath the great dome, and where, during the Easter solemnities, many pilgrims are lodged, he will find himself in the chapel devoted to the Latins, which, hardly rejoicing in a fair amount of daylight, possesses an air of solemn grandeur. The centre of attraction in this chapel is situated behind an iron grating, between the bars of which he will perceive, when his eyes have accustomed themselves to the gloom, a portion of a column. To this column his guide will inform him our Lord was bound when He was scourged. For a moment he will wonder how any pilgrim is enabled to pay a further adoration than by gazing at it, as he has already done himself, through the grating; another brief moment of patience, however, solves the difficulty. A Hadji approaches, and taking up a pole from a neighbouring corner, he thrusts it between the bars till it touches the sacred column, then drawing it out, he presses the extremity to his lips and retires.

At last the traveller enquires the way to Calvary, and being prepared, from the accounts of other travellers, to find it somewhere on the first floor, is not so startled as he might be by being told, "the

first turning to the right, upstairs." Following in the stream of pilgrims, he ascends a short flight of stone steps, and partly bewildered by the dense crowd of worshippers collected into so small a space, the clouds of incense, the chaunting of the priests engaged in the service, and the blaze of light produced from innumerable gigantic candles, and perfect showers of golden lamps, he makes fruitless attempts to realise the fact of his standing on the summit of that mountain where, eighteen hundred years ago, a very different crowd had assembled to gaze—some in grief, but almost all in ridicule and triumph—upon the suffering Saviour as He hung here upon the cross between the two thieves.

Above perhaps the most gorgeously furnished altar that he has yet seen, and half hidden by lamps and candles, is a cross to which is nailed a life-size image of the Saviour, resplendent with jewels, numerous gold and silver ornaments, and hung about with flowers. Beneath this altar he is shown the three holes made by the crosses, the centre one being cased with gold. To the right, on the removal of a metal plate, he will see, if he kneel down, the natural rock beneath the flooring, a deep fissure in which is said to be the result of the earthquake which followed the expiration of our Lord.

I have no wish to make disparaging reflections upon the Holy Sepulchre Church, so as to lead my reader to the conclusion that I regretted my visit, for so novel and exciting a scene did I consider it, that I often repeated it without ever failing to reap a great deal of amusement — much as I lament that its atmosphere was only calculated to amuse a passing hour. That it was no fault of mine I am quite convinced, for no one could have ascended to Calvary, or pushed aside the crimson curtain which veils the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre, with more sincere intentions of realising the sanctity of the spot.

Squeezing myself wherever I turned with an amount of labour far from pleasant, I seemed to become callous to all holy associations, and found myself devoting my whole attention to the general architecture of the building, and the curiously attired crowd which thronged me, instead of to the objects for the glorification of which all these highly decorated chapels and splendid altars were intended, and for the adoration of which so many thousands were then filling the streets of Jerusalem.

So captivating is the appearance which the far-famed Mosque of Omar presents to any one standing

on the summit of Mount Olivet, that the traveller seldom rests content until he has seen it from a nearer point. As it is entirely enclosed with the houses of scrupulous Mussulmen, this little fancy of the traveller would seem at first sight to be fraught with such difficulty as to be almost out of the question; so that he is not a little pleased, on reaching his hotel, to find that a very moderate bucksheesh will procure him an order to ascend to the roof of the Turkish Governor's house, whence a most complete view is had of the site of the old Temple, now occupied by the Mosque, and which, after Mecca, ranks as the next most holy place in the Moslem mind.

In the centre of an extensive area, lawned from end to end with soft green turf, its surface diversified with groups of acacias and melancholy cypresses, rises the magnificent Mosque of Omar. It is situated on a daïs of white marble, raised a few steps above the turf: its form is octagon, and, being built or overlaid with some green substance, presents a very gorgeous appearance, as the sun strikes on its polished surface. Surrounding it, on the outer edge of the raised daïs, are numerous colonnades of white marble and several mausoleums, the small white

domes of which are built of the same material, and sparkle in the sun.

Our visit to the Haram was made a little after noon; and, beneath the shade of the acacias, obedient to the chaunt of the mueddin to mid-day prayer, were collected many devout Mussulmen, engaged in prostrating themselves with their faces to the earth, towards the sacred building in the centre.

As all entrance to the Mosque of Omar is denied to the Christian, and as it is even said that instant death is the reward of the man who shall dare to violate its sacred precincts, the Haram-el-Shereef is invested in the Giaour's mind with a mystery so profound, that as he stands on the roof of the Governor's house, gazing down upon its charming gardens, its porticos, and fountains of glistening marble, he is seized with a longing, like the man who stands on the brink of a precipice, to precipitate himself headlong, let what will be the result.

History tells only of four Franks who have had the boldness to fathom its mysteries—*viz.*, Mr. Richardson, in 1818, and Messrs. Bonomi, Catherwood, and Arundale, in 1838, who, by some extraordinary combination of circumstances, managed, not only to gain access to the gardens and mosque itself,

but even to make most minute drawings of all the interior arrangements.*

On the Western exterior of the Haram-el-Shereef is situated the spot where the remnant of the ancient rulers of Jerusalem have purchased the right of lamenting and wailing over the downfall of their nation, and the departed glory of their beloved Temple. The approach to it is through the Jews' quarter, and, as usual, the dirtiest part of the city. However, the labyrinth of narrow and squalid lanes which are passed on the way here terminates in an open space, beneath what is supposed to be a portion of the old Temple wall. The lower part of it is composed of very large bevelled stones, against which numbers of Jews in their fur caps, with open copies of the Talmud, from which they keep repeating passages, lean their foreheads in the deepest dejection. Ranged along the opposite wall, seated on the ground, the most part with their faces buried in their hands, are the women, who, what time that

* Since my visit to Jerusalem and the dispute about the Holy Places, I am told that the Mussulman world has been forced to abandon many of its scruples about Christians entering the mosques, and that the Haram-el-Shereef is no longer looked upon as the grave of any Frank who shall penetrate its mysteries.

they are not peering between their fingers at the traveller, appear to be engaged in prayer, at times sending forth a dismal groan. Numbers of other men are to be seen walking up and down, reciting in a loud tone passages from the Talmud, and, frequently stopping, sway their bodies to and fro, while gazing with sorrowful countenances towards the site of the Temple; then, suddenly stepping forwards, they spread the palms of their hands upon the wall, and kiss, with tears in their eyes, the great bevelled stones. Altogether it is the most affecting, and, I thoroughly believe, the most genuine expression of grief.

The evening of the day on which I visited the Jews' place of wailing was so exquisitely bright and balmy, that, though the rapidly declining sun was already warning all the inhabitants of the city to collect within its walls before the closing of the gates, I could not resist the temptation of a short stroll into the country; so, climbing upon the massive old grey walls, which look down on the side into the valley of Hinnom, I walked along them till I came to the Zion Gate.

At this gate are collected the lepers, about fifty in number, who always remain here to implore the charity of all persons entering or leaving the city.

They are quite distinct from the rest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who look upon them, as of old, as unclean; and being thus forced to intermarry with themselves, they perpetuate the disease. The moment I came in sight, about half a dozen ran forward to ask alms, displaying as they did so their fingerless hands and stunted proportions to excite my pity.

Passing through the gate, I followed the road which runs for a few hundred yards on the left beneath the city walls, and then winds down the mountain side, past the Pool of Siloam. Arrived at the fountain of Enrogel, I lay down upon the turf in the shade of the small dome which covers the well.

Hidden by the intervening hills, the sharp angle of the temple wall on the summit of Moriah is all that is here to be seen of Jerusalem; whilst immediately to my right, hanging on to the bare rock, was the wild village of Siloam — a strange mixture of mud huts, tombs converted into dwellings, and black canvass tents.

Numbers of fierce-eyed Bedouins, with long guns slung across their shoulders, groups of savage unveiled women, and swarms of naked children of both sexes, playing with hungry wolf-like dogs, and firing

off sharp volleys of bucksheesh cries the moment a traveller is seen, offered me no inducement to look more closely at Siloam.

In all my walks about Jerusalem, I found no spot so pretty as Enrogel. Surrounded with foliage and cornfields, one forgets the sterility and desolation by which, on all other sides, the Holy City is characterized; and often, during my sojourn of three weeks here, I whiled away many a pleasant hour with my sketch-book and pencil, listening to the soporific dripping of the water from the moist sides of the well. And it is these quiet solitudes, more than all the churches and altars which are erected over the most sacred spots, and with which the city itself teems, that form the great charm to the traveller, who really visits Jerusalem with a view of bringing home to his mind the deeply-interesting fact of being where our Saviour spent the greater part of his life. However careless a man may be of that which concerns his soul, when he leaves the noise and bustle of the city, and descends to Enrogel, or climbs the side of the Mount of Olives, or wanders forth on the road to Bethany, with the same scene before him upon which our Saviour must so often have gazed, it is impossible but that such moments as these must have their effect upon him, and make

him think seriously, whether he be a believer in Christianity or not.

Continuing my walk, I left Enrogel, and climbed to the summit of the so-called Mount of the Prophets; and, gaining from thence the Mount of Olives, I once more looked upon the Holy City as the sun was commencing to set, gilding with its rays the multitude of mosques and minarets which tapered up into the evening sky within its walls.

CHAP. XXIV.

MAR-SABA.

WE were hanging one morning out of the hotel window, gazing on the crowded street beneath, and consoling ourselves with the notion that we had killed, not only all the lions of the city itself, but all those of any notability within the twelve-mile circuit, when the voice of Mohammad conversing with the landlord stole upon the silence of the *salle-à-manger*: — “Oui, c’est justement ça ! Nous allons partir tout de suite pour le Mer Mort ; nous nous ferons passer par Jéricho et le Couvent de Mar-Saba ! — une affaire de trois jours — pas plus !”

Drawing our heads into the room, we turned to our dragoman to know who was on the point of starting for the Dead Sea, Jericho, &c.; and learning that he was alluding to ourselves, we felt the mercury of our spirits rise several degrees, at the thought of quitting the white glaring walls and hot streets of the city, and again taking the field, even for the purpose of killing more game.

That evening we had an interview with the

sheikh through whose territory we were to pass — a magnificent specimen, as far as height, breadth of chest, and a handsome face go, of what a man ought to be. On the payment of a very considerable number of piastres, he gave us a species of passport, by the possession and exhibition of which we were to travel unmolested through his dominions.

Having sent on our tents and baggage-mules at sunrise the next morning, with a part of the sheikh's escort of soldiers, we mounted our horses about eight o'clock, A.M., and followed in their steps with the three remaining Bedouins. Surmounting a spur of the Mount of Olives, and leaving the little village of Bethany on our left, we soon after entered the scorching wastes of the Desert of Quarantana, among the deep ravines of which we went slowly riding till past noon.

When we had almost completed our descent from the high land about Jerusalem into the plains of Jericho, the sheikh of our escort turned to us, and, with many salaams, invited us to send our baggage-mules to Jericho — (not in the sense in which we in England often invite creatures and things which are obnoxious to us to betake themselves) — and to go ourselves and dragoman to his encampment, which

he said was not far off, there to refresh ourselves, and afterwards to proceed on our journey. As we were anxious to see something of Bedouin life among the mountains, we accepted his invitation; and, turning to the left out of the road, and following him, we came in about half an hour in sight of the camp. A dozen large savage dogs, showing every tooth in their heads, came "tumbling over their own growls" to welcome us. The noise they made roused the whole tribe, and numbers of men, snatching up their guns, ran together from all quarters towards us: the instant, however, that they saw us in the company of their sheikh, their fierce countenances became radiant with smiles, and, beating the dogs back, each one strove to outdo the other in helping us to dismount, and in many other little ways "doing the civil."

Our horses having been led away, we were conducted by the sheikh to his own tent in the centre of the camp: and all their best carpets having been rolled up into a divan, we seated ourselves thereon; and, whilst food was being prepared for us in another tent, we remained undeserving objects of the most intense admiration, or perhaps I ought to use the word *curiosity*. A few of the principal men, and the sheikh's little son—a child of four

years old — were the only ones that were privileged to sit in the tent with us, whilst the rest of the tribe formed such a dense crowd round the door as totally to exclude the daylight. The men, with hardly an exception, were all fine handsome fellows, but I cannot say as much for the women.

The sheikh's child afforded us much amusement, being about the most peevish, worst tempered specimen of humanity in miniature that I ever had the misfortune of being in contact with. He seemed to prefer *squalling* to *speaking*; but for this fancy he really had more excuse than most children, being so loaded with chains, and coins, and ornaments of all kinds, which made such a jingle whenever he moved, that perhaps he found himself incapable of hearing his own voice, unless he uttered it in any tone short of a scream.

As all the men and women vied with one another in currying favour with their chief, they resorted to the expedient of cramming the unfortunate infant with anything eatable they could lay their hands on; the result of this was, that the child was so fat that he could hardly open his eyes, and, carrying more flesh than his small bones were capable of sustaining, he rolled and tumbled about, much in the manner I could fancy any small statue would,

which had been carved out of a huge jelly fish, instead of a block of marble.

The better to preserve our composure, with so many curious eyes all round and about us, we requested to be provided with pipes ; and then lying back on the divan, we conversed at our leisure, by means of Mohammad, with the sheikh, Aboo Sea, as he called himself, and his chief men. In due time the refreshment which had been promised was “dished up”—or rather “pitched down”—consisting of a great heap of white dough pancakes, to which were presently added two earthen bowls, one containing oil and the other butter, mashed up with a quantity of powdered sugar. Being a little uncertain whether we were to make our repast off the oil and butter, merely using the bread pancakes as an accompaniment, or *vice versâ*, or to divide our attentions equally between each, we requested the sheikh to lead off. This he did by first baring his right arm, and then, breaking off a large morsel of bread, he dipped it in the oil, and after rubbing it about in the butter and sugar, he threw his head back and dropped it into his open mouth ; afterwards he sucked his fingers with immense relish, and motioned us to do likewise. Tucking up the sleeves on our right arms, we imitated his manœuvre

exactly — though the sucking of the fingers was not performed with such apparent relish: then all the other men followed our example, till the sheikh's turn came again, when he led off the second round. By degrees, from first thinking the mixture actually nauseous, we came at last positively to like it, and we began to watch that every one "ate fair." When the heap of dough was consumed, all but a few fragments, and the oil and the butter dishes were emptied, except what adhered to the sides, the women were told they might have the rest; nor did they seem at all annoyed that they had not been invited to partake of the meal before. Coffee and pipes followed; and when the sun began to sink towards the west, we re-mounted our horses, and, bidding adieu to our Bedouin friends, we rode on under the guidance of the sheikh to Jericho, where we arrived a little before sunset, finding the tents pitched, camp fires lighted, and every preparation being made for our dinner.

Of the city of Jericho nought now remains to tell even of the ground which it covered, though the spot where we pitched our tents is universally believed to be its site, about three miles to the west of the Jordan, and the same distance to the north of the Dead Sea.

Withdrawing to a short distance from the camp, we stretched ourselves beneath an acacia. The night was intensely clear; and, as we gazed up among the myriads of stars above us, we could not help feeling what a much more overwhelming notion of infinite space (if it is possible to use such an adjective in connection with a word which necessarily implies something *finite*) one forms here in the East than in England. An eastern night sky is so much more pure and black, and the stars so much brighter, that, even with the naked eye, one is able to single out each separate heavenly body, thus bringing home to the mind so much more vividly the fact of their hanging in space, and to detect that, though some are to all appearance smaller than others, it is because they are so much farther away.

A burst of merriment from the tents made us suddenly leave thinking of the stars, and turn our attention to whence it proceeded. Our Bedouin attendants, assisted by the *moukris*, or muleteers, having heaped together an immense pile of dry wood in the centre of the camp, had just set fire to it, and, fanned by the gentlest of night breezes, the flames went leaping up high above the tents. As

they seemed about to amuse themselves in some way or another, we drew near to watch.

Holding each other's hands, and forming a ring, they commenced dancing and singing round the fire. Getting more boisterous, they at length broke away from each other, and danced off in different directions, always converging again after a few seconds within the glow of the flames. When tired with this figure, they all formed in line, arm linked in arm, and one of them acting as leader stood in front. Producing mysterious noises in their throats, intended I believe to mimic hyænas or jackals, or perhaps lions or tigers (but I am not sure which, as I did not enquire), they commenced to sway their bodies from right to left; then, following the motions of their leader, they shook off their capotes; then they tore off their head-dresses, allowing the long horse-tails of hair on the tops of their heads to stream over their shoulders. At one period of the dance they all drew their swords, which flashed for an instant in the fire-light, as they struck them simultaneously into the earth; then, stripping till they were almost entirely naked, they went dancing in and out among the half-buried blades, clapping their hands above their heads, and singing, or rather yelling, at the tops of their voices.

As the fires burned low, their dancing energies flagged, and they were soon all sleeping, wrapped in their capotes, around the fast-expiring embers. We also retired to our tent; and, whilst our Arab attendants lay snoring at the door, and Mohammad talked in an under-tone in Italian to Halifa, the cook, as they washed up the tea-things together, I employed myself in writing the daily quantum of my journal, with particulars of our visit to the Bedouins, and the dance round the camp-fires at Jericho.

After watching the mules with our camp effects start across the plain towards the Dead Sea, on their way to the Convent of Mar-Saba, whither they were taking a request from us to the brethren to prepare supper and a night's lodging against our arrival at sunset, we mounted our horses, and, accompanied by Mohammad and our Bedouin guard, rode on to the Jordan.

Arrived at the river, we were charmed with the excessive beauty of the spot, supposed to be the same where the Israelites crossed under Joshua. Not more than thirty yards in width, the Jordan here rushes round a bend with fearful velocity towards the Dead Sea. The numerous large trees which grow on either side, stretching their branches

far over its muddy waters, scarcely allow of any sunshine except just in the middle of the stream. Shrubs of all kinds, and of almost tropical luxuriance, rise high above the tangled underwood; whilst beneath the shade of acacias, mixed with rhododendron, oleander, and all the most showy of Syrian flowers, are seen fox-gloves, wild hyacinths, and blue hare-bells in the greatest profusion. It is here that the pilgrims bathe during the Easter festivals, and which ceremony we might have been witnesses of, had we chosen to delay our visit by a few days; but as we reclined upon the shelving bank with our chibouques, enjoying the warm morning air, not yet heated by the mid-day sun, and the most perfect silence, enhanced, rather than broken, by the gurgling of the river, as it rushed along under the trees close at our feet, we came to a conclusion — perhaps it was an erroneous one, yet nevertheless we did come to a conclusion — that it was better thus to visit the Jordan, than when those solitudes, in which we now luxuriated, were violated by a collection of four thousand frantically-religious pilgrims of both sexes, some half naked, but the most part entirely so, engaged in dipping themselves and families in its waters.

Remounting our horses, we turned their heads towards the Dead Sea, and, leaving the foliage and wild hyacinths behind us, we struck across the desert plain, arriving at the Great Salt Lake, or, as it is called by the Arabs, "Bahr-el-Lout," *i. e.* Sea of Lot, in about two hours' gentle riding.

All the accounts that I had ever read of the Dead Sea describe it, and the surrounding neighbourhood, as one of the most dismal, sepulchral localities that it is possible to imagine. This may possibly be the case during the time of the kampseen, when the sky is overcast with clouds, and when the sulphureous vapours arise from its waters in such heavy masses as to shroud from view the fine mountains which tower up on either side; but, whatever appearance it may present on such occasions, —and they must be few and far between, as it is seldom that a bright unclouded sun does not shine upon its blue waters—it was not so to-day. As I stood upon the shingle, gazing over an expanse of water, so intensely blue that I could fancy the deepest nook in the Mediterranean, beneath the brightest of June suns, would have seemed green compared with it, the huge Moabite mountains rising abruptly from its azure depths on one side, and the high land above Mar-Saba convulsed into a hundred fantastic shapes on

the other, the whole coloured with all the various tints that one ever sees in the changing face of nature between sunrise and sunset,—I thought I had never looked upon any picture deserving of such enthusiastic admiration as the Dead Sea and its surrounding scenery. It is true that all is so scorched and barren, that not a leaf or blade of grass is here to give relief to the eye; yet the blue surface of the lake itself, and the rich colouring in which the whole country round is steeped, is quite sufficient to atone for this: and I went away carrying with me reminiscences of a picture possessed of such peculiar beauty, that I might wander where I would over the wide world, and not meet with any spot which I could compare with it.

Anxious to test the accounts of travellers touching the buoyancy of its waters, I disrobed myself, and, plunging in, was soon engaged in springing rather than swimming over its blue wavelets. At each stroke that I made, my head, arms, and entire shoulders, down nearly to my waist, rose above the surface; nor was I able to keep my feet, whilst in motion, under water, so that my progress was rendered slow in the extreme. I even found that, without taking the trouble to turn on my back, if I merely desisted from striking out, I remained

motionless on the surface, my head and shoulders well above water; whilst, on turning to look for my feet, I found that they also were unable to remain below, and were sticking up behind. So long as I remained in the water, I found it most cool and refreshing; though immediately on gaining the land, it seemed as if I had emerged from an oil-tub; and, on attempting to dry myself with a towel, I was obliged, after a most violent rubbing, to give it up in despair, and to put on my clothes, notwithstanding the clammy moisture which oozed from every pore, and which I found impossible to rectify by rubbing. This unpleasant dampness lasted for two or three days, in fact, until I was able to bathe in fresh water on my return to Jerusalem. To the taste, the Dead Sea water is nauseous in the extreme, most intensely bitter as well as salt, and burns into the skin like vinegar. Returning to our horses, we rode along the shingle, which was thickly strewn with lumps of bitumen, for some time; and then, striking to the right, among the limestone rocks, we pushed on, in order to reach the Convent of Mar-Saba before sunset. A most romantic ride of three hours brought us in sight of the two stone towers which guard the entrance to the convent on the western wall, and, soon after, we were knocking at

the gates for admittance. On entering we found our mules already arrived and collected in a small court-yard on a level with the two stone towers, but at some height above the principal part of the convent.

The Convent of Mar-Saba is Greek, and is one of the most curious in the whole of Syria, being strongly fortified, to resist the attacks of Bedouins, and is built hanging to one side of a deep and most precipitous ravine. From the entrance-gate down to the chapel, whence you may look over the parapet directly down into the dark glen below, we descended from ledge to ledge by means of stone staircases. Arrived at the lowest ledge, over against the chapel, we were conducted, by the brother who presides over the refectory, to the strangers' room—an extremely comfortable one, nicely carpeted, with a most luxurious divan, raised about three inches from the ground, running entirely round it, and a low deal table in the centre. It was lighted by two good-sized windows, commanding a view of the entire convent, which rose up immediately in front—a mingled mass of stone walls, small red-tiled houses, buttresses, and staircases, to the height of about 150 feet.

Considering it was Lent with the Greek Church,

we were provided with a most plenteous meal of rice and fowls, and then mounting to the flat roof of our room with our chibouques and coffee, we sat till a late hour, gazing with delight upon the romantic position of the old convent in the moonlight; and when at last we threw ourselves on our divans to sleep, it was to be awoke at intervals by the chapel-bell tolling the hour of the night.

With the first streak of daylight we were astir: but before leaving the convent, and whilst the mules were being packed at the gates, we were shown over it by one of the lay brothers. As we walked from one point of interest to another, he told us the convent was founded 1200 years ago by San Saba, a Greek monk, and that it had passed through more miseries and vicissitudes than perhaps any other establishment of the kind in the world; that when Syria was invaded by the Persians, all the monks were massacred to a man, in proof of which he not only sold me, for the sum of a few piastres, a gigantic sort of pocket-handkerchief, upon which were depicted in the minutest detail all the horrors of the massacre, but he also took us to a cave, and, bidding us look through the grating which barred the entrance, we shuddered at the sight of human skulls,

to the number of 14,000, heaped together, a terrible memento of that day of slaughter. But I suppose this large number included not only those of the monks, but also of the hermits, with whom this valley teemed in time of yore; and very likely, as we may conclude that the good monks made a certain amount of savage resistance, many of the Persians themselves.

The chapel, like all Greek places of worship, was gorgeous to a degree, every square inch of wall being loaded with either painting or gilded ornament of some kind. Bidding adieu to the monks, we mounted from ledge to ledge by means of the stone staircases to the summit of the convent, on a level with the entrance gates, where we found our horses waiting for us, the mules having gone on before to Bethlehem.

Three hours' riding from Mar-Saba brought us within sight of the latter place, situated on the top of a hill, the citadel-like Convent of our Lady forming the principal feature of the town. The Bethlehemites are an industrious class, and all the country round is brought by them into a high state of cultivation. As we approached the town, we passed through very extensive vineyards, a most pleasing contrast to the desolation we had left

behind us at the Dead Sea. From time immemorial have the women of Bethlehem been famous above all the fair of Syria for their beauty; and seldom does any traveller return to England, careless though he may have been of the elegant grouping of minarets and palm trees, the effect of Moorish arcades, or sunset tints, without a few words in praise of the maids of Bethlehem. Long before he has seen their Madonna-like faces, his heart has warmed towards them from the mere fact of their being all Christians; and now as he stands watching them crowding from all sides, bareheaded, towards the church doors, obedient to the convent bell, green turbans, mueddin cries, prostrations five times a-day, and aught that savours of Mahomet, are for a time forgotten.

As we intended remaining here for the day, and it was yet quite early, my friend and I rode round the town with Mohammad, in order to select some pretty spot where to pitch our tents. We at length decided upon a small field at some distance from any houses, in which were a number of olive trees, whence we had a most delightful prospect. Sitting in our tent doors, we looked upon Bethlehem rising in the immediate fore-ground, the hill-side clothed with vineyards and fresh green corn-fields, the red

cliffs about Mar-Saba, the huge Moabite mountains, and all the country beyond Jordan.

Having settled ourselves in our new quarters, we repaired with Mohammad to the convent. Built on the brow of the hill at the further side of the town from our encampment, it seemed really to require the massive buttresses by which it is flanked, to prevent it from falling over into the plain beneath. It is strongly fortified, the only entrance being through a small iron door deeply set in a wall of immense thickness. After partaking of some lunch in the refectory, we found our way into the chapel, where mass was being performed; and one of the monks volunteering to show us all that would be likely to interest us, we followed him with lighted candles down a flight of stone steps, leading subterraneously from one corner of the building. Threading our way along a succession of galleries, and past many small shrines cut in the rock, we at length arrived at the Chapel of the Nativity, a small chamber divided into two compartments, separated from each other by a few steps. The natural rock, out of which these two chapels are hewn, though for the most part covered with tapestry, showed itself in some places. From the ceiling pended an almost innumerable quantity of lamps, but as only

a few immediately over the altar were lighted, it brought out the small shrine, which glittered with ornaments and offerings of all kinds, into strong relief against the surrounding gloom. Our attendant friar, first devoutly kneeling and crossing himself, kissed a spot beneath the altar, which was explained to us when he rose, by the words engraved on a small plate of gold encircling it, "*Hic de Virgine, Jesus Christus natus est.*"

The second and lower compartment of the cave, into which we descended by means of the few steps before alluded to, is much smaller than the first—in fact, is more like a deep recess. On one side we were shown the manger where our Lord was laid, and which, though it is said to retain its original form, is now overlaid with white marble: opposite to it, a small gold star, set in the pavement, marks the spot where the Magi knelt to offer their gifts to the infant Saviour.

Though I did not doubt but that the cave in which I stood really afforded shelter to the blessed Virgin—for it is still a common practice among the Easterns to lodge their animals in subterraneous stables—yet I found it very hard to realise the peculiar sanctity of the spot; all that I saw was so utterly at variance with the notion I had formed of Beth-

lehem, and the stable attached to the inn, "where the young child was," and over which the star rested.

After leaving the convent, we returned to our encampment, and mounting our horses we rode along the road towards Hebron, in order to visit the famous pools of Solomon. An hour's ride over a very rough road brought us to them: they are three in number, below the level of the high road from Jerusalem to Hebron; and even for the present day would, I suppose, be considered most stupendous works. There is more or less water in all three, though the one furthest from the road contains the most. They were built as reservoirs to supply Jerusalem with water, and which function they perform to the present day by means of a cistern or aqueduct extending all the way to the city by way of Bethlehem.

We returned by a different and far prettier road through some densely wooded valleys—and reached our tents as a nearly full moon was commencing to throw a flood of light over the birthplace of our Lord.

It was late before we sought our couches. The moon was so bright and clear, and the night so perfectly soft and silent, that we were most unwilling

to retire to our tents; sitting hour after hour on the brow of the hill where we had pitched our camp, sheltered by an olive-tree, which had grown in the uncertain moonlight into twice its actual size, we gazed upon Bethlehem and the massive old convent, which, supported by its heavy buttresses, stood boldly forward into the scene around us, high above the plain, and made doubly prominent by the broad belt of white mist, which, rising in thick volumes from the Dead Sea, shrouded all the country beyond.

A couple of hours' gentle riding the next morning brought us back, by way of Rachel's tomb and the Convent of Mâr-Elyâs, to our old quarters in Jerusalem.

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CHAP. XXV.

LAST DAYS IN JERUSALEM.

EVERY one who wanders to any distance from England, whether a proficient in the art of drawing or a perfect ignoramus as to its very rudiments, seems to consider it his duty to carry with him a great box full of black lead pencils, a twelve month's supply of india rubber, and such reams of drawing paper as would enable him to make a panorama of his whole tour. Being thus amply stocked with all the necessary implements, if he does not actually produce anything worthy the great dome of the Colosseum in Regent's Park, or capable of superseding Albert Smith's series of pictures at the Egyptian Hall — still he generally manages, by dint of severe labour and utter disregard of noon-day suns, to present his friends, on his return to England, with an innumerable quantity of odds and ends, and half-finished sketches of nearly all the people, places, and buildings it has been his lot to set eyes on. However poor a draughtsman he may be, no object presents a sufficient amount of difficulties to deter him from

attempting to place its likeness on his drawing-board. If he has been up the Nile and remained for some time in Cairo, the chances are that, by the time he reaches Palestine, he will have become disgusted with his multitudinous abortive efforts, and will have consigned his paper, pencils, and india rubber to the lowest depths of his portmanteau, refraining from scattering the result of all his labours to the winds only in the hope that they will eventually become the property and pride of some kind and considerate sister. Jerusalem, from the summit of the Mount of Olives, is generally his last sketch. For some time past he has been tottering on the verge of the idea that he was not born for an artist, when the two long hours that he spends beneath a white cotton umbrella, struggling in vain to make a correct note of its long, irregular lines of castellated wall, enclosing countless white-domed houses and clustering minarets, completely kick him off that stage upon which he has been so long endeavouring to sustain a part.

If I thought it likely that any of my readers would doubt the truth of this statement, I would give the names and addresses of several of my travelling companions in a note at the bottom of the page to whom they might refer; but I am in hopes they

will be content with my own experiences on the subject, which resulted in my being quite tired with putting in, and rubbing out, and commencing again, and, lastly, in tearing up each individual attempt, restoring my drawing materials to the pocket of my shooting coat, and a walk back into that city which was so averse to having its portrait taken. The day on which I ceased to fancy myself an artist was a great fête with the Mussulmen, and swarms of pilgrims, in holiday attire, were joyously engaged in forming processions on the sunny slopes of Mount Moriah and in the valley beneath, to go to Neby Moussa, the mountain of Moses; and what with the shouting of the men, the lengthening ziraleet of the women, the waving of banners, and the firing of many guns, which floated continuously up from the crowds assembled like a moving rainbow on the hill, the whole atmosphere around and above them was filled with noise and gaiety.

Our sojourn at Jerusalem was now drawing to a close, and what little time was left us was devoted to purchasing horses and in numberless other preparations for a month's ride through Syria; though, as luck would have it, we managed to find a few minutes for very nearly getting into a scrape.

Wandering we did not know exactly whither, but

somewhere in the vicinity of the Mosque of Omar, we chanced to pass under a gateway into a large open space. Whilst we were wondering where we had got to, we became aware that sundry small stones and bits of orange peel were being thrown in our direction; and, on turning to see whence they came, and, if necessary, to remonstrate with the offenders, we observed numbers of men and boys all running towards us. Of course our first impulse was to walk off in the opposite direction, totally careless whither it might lead; but, to our annoyance, we met green turbans coming from every quarter, who seemed to take a great deal more interest in our movements than we fancied they had any business. We at last determined to make a stand, and were speedily surrounded. Not understanding a single word of Turkish, we were at a loss to answer the multitudinous cries and queries which were addressed to us from all sides. Concluding from the direction of their outstretched arms that we were to return whence we came, we retraced our steps, and, our progress considerably accelerated by pushes and vociferations in an angry tone of "Yessukh, ya Nasarani!" we at length reached the gateway which had introduced us to all this excitement. Here our attendant crowd paused and watched us with much

laughter, as we made off up the street we had originally left, followed by a stray stone or two from the boys.

When we reached our hotel, we enquired the meaning of the word "Yessukh!" and found that it meant "It is forbidden;" and on our relating our adventure to Mohammad, he told us that we had got by mistake into the outer court of the Mosque, and that it was well for us we had gone no further, or it might have fared worse with us.

My last day in Jerusalem being Palm Sunday, I rendered myself at the early hour of four in the morning beneath the great dome of the Sepulchre Church, in order to be present at the sunrise mass. As usual on such occasions, there was a great deal of excitement and ill-feeling displayed among the different sects: all were armed with palm branches, with which they strove to enforce their various opinions; and we thought it quite time, after having been jostled about for an hour or so, to retire from a scene which, as the sun was not yet up, and there were only half a dozen candles and a couple of dimly-burning lamps to assist in his absence, certainly wanted more light thrown upon it than was produced by the noisy multitude, whose only object seemed to be that of making a row, and seeking for

opportunities of "assault and battery" with their palm-branches.

Before retiring to bed, I ascended to the house-top, to have one more look at the Holy City before the bustling moment of actual departure arrived. It was a lovely night, and the great dome of the Sepulchre Church loomed larger and seemed nearer than by day. Afar off, resting lightly upon the Eastern ramparts, glanced beautiful in the moon-light the lofty cupolas and well-proportioned domes of Omar and El-Aksa, like stars of the first magnitude among the countless domelets of the intervening and surrounding houses. Behind me, sturdy and strong, stood the almost imperishable tower of Hippicus, destined—if Mussulman forebodings have any foundation—to see Jerusalem again overthrown, and in the hands of conquerors. No mueddin now from the minaret's gallery urged the waking Mussulman to prostrate himself in prayer; gone to bed were all the singing-boys; closed were all the coffee-shops; and, save the occasional barking of a dog prowling about in search of food, the whole city slept.

Filled with regret at the thought of leaving it all behind me on the morrow, I still lingered on the house-top, unwilling, while it was yet in my power,

to have done with gazing on a scene upon which the Saviour must so often have looked. Was not the general aspect of the city the same now as 1800 years ago? Beneath me lay the pool of Hezekiah, and behind me the tower of Hippicus, as then; the streets were as narrow and as steep as when our Saviour walked along them; and, except that, on looking eastwards to the Mount of Olives, I should have seen the Temple marked against the sky instead of the minarets and dome of Omar, Jerusalem was almost the same.

Notwithstanding the amount of levity with which I have alluded in these pages to the numerous sacred spots in and about the Holy City, I certainly did not follow the prevailing fashion of doubting their identity. I endeavoured, from first to last, to believe, so far as it was in accordance with the dictates of common sense, every thing that my guide told me—my principle being, that as the shortness of my visit did not give me time to sift the “whys” and “wherefores” of the case, I derived more pleasure from fancying them all true, than by continually struggling, as the majority of travellers are prone, to find out a reason for laughing at them.

All Christian travellers, whether credulous or

the contrary, stand, the first day of their arrival in Jerusalem, on the same ground, and, beyond all question, are in that city, where the Saviour spent the greater part of His life, and where eventually upon Calvary He died. This granted, I found it impossible to sympathise with any one who tried to throw every thing—the site of *this*, or the actual existence of *that*—overboard altogether, as supremely ridiculous, and without foundation. What more likely than that anything, however trifling, in connection with so great a fact in the annals of the world as the descent of God's own Son to earth, should have been treasured up in the minds of those who loved Him, and of whom there must always have been a few; and that the greatest delight these chosen few took in calling to mind that Saviour, was by handing down from father to son the very spots where this precept was enunciated, or that lament uttered?

But, however weak this argument, it is only reasonable to conclude, that I remember all the points of real or supposed interest with far more pleasure than the man who entered Palestine, and finally left it, the disposition ever uppermost in his mind to disbelieve or sneer at all he heard or saw.

CHAP. XXVI.

NABLOUS.

HAVING sent on the tents and baggage, with directions where to encamp for the night, my friend and I, in company with three other English travellers, who had left Cairo a week or ten days before I had, to proceed to Jerusalem by way of Mount Sinai, bade a final adieu to the Holy City; and, making our exit through the Jaffa Gate, we soon after struck into the Damascus road, and in half an hour, ascending to the summit of a slight eminence, we looked our last upon its old grey walls, and its mingled mass of domes and minarets, which spired shiningly into the evening sky.

Our horses were all in excellent condition, and unable to control our spirits at the thoughts of the pleasant month we were about to spend almost entirely in our high pommelled Turkish saddles—(albeit, that the saddles themselves had nothing in common with our anticipated happiness, for such uncomfortable pieces of horse-furniture I trust I

may never again have anything to do with)—we every now and then broke into a headlong gallop over the soft turf with which the road was edged on either side at intervals, leaving the dragomen far behind, whom long experience had taught to husband their steeds' strength against the heavy work we should have to encounter.

About an hour after leaving Jerusalem we passed, on our left, the half-ruined village of Ramah, the ancient Gibeah, and at half-after six, P. M., we reached our encampment at Beer, distant from the Holy City four hours.

After sun-down it became very cold and gusty, and so dense a mist came gathering round our tents as quite to shroud a nearly full moon from our view.

Striking the tents at sunrise the next morning, we came, after five hours' riding, through a pretty and fertile country, to some ruins situated at some distance from the road, marked in our maps as Silon.

All Eastern writers, and especially Dr. Robinson, have determined this spot to be the site of the ancient Shiloh, where was the Ark of God, and where the Tabernacle was first set up by Joshua. We paused here for half an hour to rest our horses

and to partake of lunch. Attracted by the sight of Frank travellers, several men came out of a village not far off, and began to talk to the dragomen. They seemed at a loss to know why so many Europeans came out of their road to see these ruins; and supposing that our object must be to find money or treasure of some kind, they informed us that we, like all others, were doomed to disappointment, for that they had searched a hundred times in every nook and corner, and if there ever had been anything worth taking, *we* ran a poor chance.

Leaving Shiloh, and passing the village of Lebonah, or El-Lubban, we descended, after a ride of three hours, into the beautiful plain of Mukna, which lay stretched out before us as far as we could see, bounded on either side by lofty mountains. Merely skirting this plain, we soon began a gradual ascent of the mountains on our left, till we reached, about a quarter of the way up, the high road to Nablous. Along this road we travelled for rather more than an hour with the most delightful view over the plain beneath and the distant mountainous country, till we arrived at the point where the mountains are divided by the valley, which branches off from the plain towards Nablous, between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. Winding round the base of

Mount Gerizim, we entered the valley in which Nablous, the ancient Sychar, is situated. The town, embosomed in the richest foliage, is built on the hill side, and is of some considerable size, with numbers of minarets tapering up into the sky above the trees. We pitched our tents, just beyond the town, on a grassy knoll, surrounded with gardens and overhanging a brook, which rushed by within hearing, beneath the shade of some mulberry trees. Whilst engaged, after dinner, with a rubber at whist, Mohammad came with a solemn countenance to say, that as the people of Nablous were a great set of thieves, it was necessary to keep a good watch through the night. The other gentlemen with whom we were travelling quite laughed at the idea of being robbed. "How was it possible," said they, "unless any one came into the tent? And we should like to see any one go as far as *that* without waking *us*." However, to make doubly sure, they engaged a guard from the town to watch at their tent door; whilst *our* dragoman, Mohammad, placing no reliance upon any guardianship but his own, spared us the expense of hiring watchers, and agreed to mount guard, himself and loaded carbine, as usual.

Wishing our travelling companions good night,

we retired to our tents, which had been pitched at some little distance from theirs; and going quietly off to sleep, we trusted the morning would find us alive, and all our property safe.

The first thing we heard on rising was, that our friends' tent, notwithstanding the hired watchers and their own extreme wakefulness, had been cut into during the night, and one gun, two saddle-bags, containing clothes, &c., and other valuables abstracted, without any one being the wiser, until daylight discovered the robbery. Thanks to our own dragoman's care, *we* had lost nothing: but much as we felt disposed to joke our friends at their having been so sure that the least noise within a hundred yards of the tents would have woke them, we felt that it would be cruel, as we stood looking at the traces of the burglary, and heard them lamenting, among other things, the loss of a favourite fowling-piece.

On questioning the guards who had been paid to prevent such audacity, they declared that, quite unconsciously, they had all dropped off to sleep. Iniquitous as such a proceeding would have been on their part, we could not help suspecting that they had been wide awake enough to have committed the crime themselves, especially as one of their

number was missing, having been obliged, as they said, to return to his work in the town before the sun rose.

Acting on the suspicion, our friends proceeded with the remainder of the guard before the Cadi, in order to try and recover, by means of the bastinado, their stolen property; whilst my companion and I mounted our horses, and rode back along the road we had travelled by the day before, as far as the foot of Mount Gerizim, in order to visit Jacob's well. This well is situated a little below the level of the road, about a mile and a half from the city, and presents the appearance of a large mound with a hole in the top. Dismounting from our horses, we let ourselves successively down into this hole. When our eyes had accustomed themselves to the darkness, we found that we were standing in a vaulted chamber, very much dilapidated, in one corner of which was the well at which our Saviour sat and talked with the woman of Samaria. On dropping a stone into it, the words of the text were verified, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is *deep*;" for it was comparatively quite a long time before the sound of the stone, arriving at the bottom, broke faintly upon our ears above. Very probably the vaulted chamber in our Lord's

time was a building erected over the well for coolness, and where travellers coming from Jerusalem would rest to refresh themselves before entering the town of Sychar, and which custom would naturally have led to such a conference as took place between our Lord and the woman of Samaria.

When we got back to Nablous, we found that, though our friends had been engaged the whole time with the Cadi, and though several of the guards had been subjected to a most severe bastinado, in the hopes of extorting confession, no tidings had been gained of the robbers. However, one man, whose account of himself had, I suppose, been more slipshod than the others, had been thrown into prison; and, as in the case of the watch, the Cadi held out hopes that the gun, &c., would shortly be forwarded to the British Consulate at Jerusalem.

Whilst striking the tents, a deputation of women, headed by the mother of the unfortunate man now in prison, came out of the city to intercede for him. The poor mother, whilst all the other women kept up a well-sustained howl, came frantically towards us, and not being able to determine which looked the most kind-hearted amongst us, began to kiss all our toes promiscuously, as we sat on our horses, all

ready to start for our day's journey. Till the dragoman explained their object, we were perplexed to know what they wanted. At first, in the pride of our hearts, we conceived that the inhabitants of Nablous in general were so sorry to lose us, that they had selected all the most beautiful of their women to entreat us to stop a little longer. Being pretty certain that the man for whom they were shedding all these tears was the culprit, we told them it was no use imploring us, the law must take its course. When they found that we were not to be entreated, they changed their demeanour, and with one accord began to curse us in a manner which, if the violence of their gestures was any criterion of the bitterness of their words, must have been dreadful to hear; but as we were in happy ignorance of what they were talking, or rather screaming about, and the dragoman only laughed at them, we rode off without paying any attention to the showers of dust and small stones which followed us.

It may seem to have been a rather reckless proceeding, the having half a dozen men bastinadoed, and one man more severely than the rest, and finally thrown into prison, whilst we quietly rode off without ever coming to any conclusion as to where and by whom our property had been taken; but the fact

was, that we had by this time seen quite enough of Eastern courts of justice to be quite certain that, if the man had taken the gun, he would long ere this have "tipped a wink" to the Cadi to that effect, who only waited our departure to become the happy possessor of it by the presentation of a mere trifle to the man, who now, with a self-possession truly wonderful, lay writhing beneath the whip of the kawass.

The morning was far advanced before we had got clear of Nablous and out of hearing of the execrations of its women, so that, as we had a long day's journey before us, we were obliged to hurry our horses and mules along. In about an hour's riding we came to where the road divided, leading in a northerly direction on our right, over the hill to Yanîn, and whither we sent the mules with orders to encamp near the town; whilst we followed on our horses the other branch to the north-west, along a stony valley towards Sebaste, the ancient Samaria.

After a toilsome ride of three hours up and down and along the hot sides of an unusually broken and rugged range of mountains, we arrived, at one P. M., at the village which occupies the site of the ancient Samaria. It is situated on the summit of a hill, standing alone in the centre of a mountain basin.

The most conspicuous object rising above its rather neatly built houses, and visible from a great distance, is the handsome tower of a Christian church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, but the architecture of which allows of its bearing no earlier date than the times of the Crusaders. It is a ruin of some extent, and its lofty walls, pierced with many windows, still stand almost entire, enclosing a large open space partially converted into a mosque by the inhabitants. On the further side of the village from the church, we came upon the scattered remnants of many a palace and temple, with which, in centuries gone by, the beautiful city of Samaria was adorned. Standing on the brow of the hill, we gazed over many acres of ground covered with large squares, and long avenues of erect and fallen columns, with here and there great blocks of masonry, which once might have gone to swell the lofty proportions of some triumphal arch. Descending the hill-side, and winding in and out among the limestone columns at its base, we soon looked our last upon Samaria, and were pushing on to gain our encampment at Yanîn before daylight forsook us.

All the afternoon we rode across a succession of plains freshly green with the springing crops of corn and millet, and separated from each other by slight

eminences. Numerous villages, all bearing names which I have found it quite impossible to remember, and all holding places in the varying scale of poverty and dirt, crowned the summits of nearly every hill we passed.

Late in the day an event occurred, which tended to raise us very considerably each in his own particular estimation, though I can hardly hope that the conclusion we formed of each other will come home to the minds of all who may read this journal, as such a perfect *ut sequitur*.

The shadows of what few trees lay sprinkled about the sides of the hill we were ascending were lengthening in the evening sun, till their summits waved far down below among the millet fields in the plain, as we approached the notoriously badly conducted, worse principled village of Jeba. Our party, consisting of six, all well mounted and armed, rode through its single street (doubtless the "High-Street," if we had been sufficiently learned to have deciphered the Arabic inscription which we saw traced on the corner house) carelessly enough, paying but little attention to the various impertinent remarks and distorted noses (they seemed to be quite ignorant of the effect produced upon every Englishman by the application of the thumb, backed

up by the four outstretched fingers) which were directed at us from all sides. We had scarcely got clear of the village, when, on looking back, we observed several of the men picking up large stones, with every intention of pitching them at our heads. Having previously determined what to do, should their daring reach such a pass, we only waited for the first stone to fly harmless among our horses' legs, when suddenly wheeling round, we charged at full gallop back again amongst the assembled villagers. Swinging our rhinoceros-hide whips above our heads, we tore down the "High-Street," dealing pain and vexation on either side of us. The inhabitants, who didn't seem to possess such a thing as a gun, or I suppose they would have produced it pretty quickly, fled, expostulating in every direction. Bent on our work of chastisement, we returned at the same pace up the now deserted "High," and only drew rein at its extremity, at finding the whole of Jeba assembled in an open space, with the women in front to entreat us to be gone. After pulling one man (whom we had detected throwing a stone of most extraordinary dimensions) out of his own house, in order to thrash him with more comfort to ourselves, we condescended to receive a most humble apology, to which the whole village sang a

chorus; and then turning our back upon Jeba, we rode away, thus giving them another opportunity for exercising their faculty of stone-throwing if they had been so minded. So complete was our victory that we almost regretted afterwards we had not relieved them of a few sheep and horned cattle, which we might have carried away as trophies of our Jeba *coup-de-main*.

Soon after losing sight of the subjugated village, we gained the summit of a high range of mountains, whence we had the most glorious panorama spread out for our admiration. Hardly noticing the lesser hills and broken country immediately beneath us, our eyes rested upon the far off plain of Esdraelon, which, bathed in the richest tints of a Syrian sunset, swept past Jezreel and the Little Hermon, away to the bases of the mountains of Nazareth. How long we might have remained gazing upon this beautiful scene, I know not, had we not been warned by the dragoman, who all this time had been altering his horse's girths, occasionally kicking him when he sidled away, that we still had some miles before we reached Yanîn. Winding down the steep mountain-side into the undulating country below, we rode through a succession of dark green clive groves, until we entered, in two hours, a dell

extending along between naked rocks all the way to Yanîn, a distance of about three miles.

The sun, which had for some time disappeared in the west, had left no last gleam to guide us to our tents; and had it not been for the glimmering of our camp fires at some distance from the city, we might have been long in finding them.

After a quiet night and no further burglaries, though we had been led to expect something of the kind here, we struck our tents at seven, A. M., and, riding for two hours across a broad plain, we arrived at Jezreel, situated, like all Syrian towns, on the summit of a hill. Beautiful as Jezreel may have been once with Ahab's palace and gardens, and Naboth's vineyard (for the latter must have of necessity been also beautiful, or a king would never have set his heart upon it), it is so no longer: a few mud huts, about the same number of inhabitants, and double the number of dogs, form the town and society of Jezreel as it is.

From the brow of the hill on which it stands we had one of the most interesting as well as beautiful scenes laid out at our feet in the whole of Syria. The view on the left was bounded by the range of hill which we had crossed the day before, and which we now saw extending far away westwards to the

Mediterranean, terminating in the bluff promontory of Mount Carmel. Immediately opposite, on the further side of the grand plain of Esdraelon, which lay stretched out beneath us in all its length and breadth, rose the mountains about Nazareth; while on the right the grassy slopes of Little Hermon, with the village of Shunem at its foot, shut out Mount Tabor and all the country beyond. Without turning our heads either to the right or left, our eyes rested upon the entire stage, as it were, upon which were played all the acts of the Second Book of Kings, in connection with Elisha and king Ahab. The entire length of the road along which the prophet ran before the chariot of Ahab was before us, from the summit of Carmel to the Gate of Jezreel, where perhaps we were standing. Just below us, on the side of the hill, must have been Naboth's vineyard, while on the right lay the little village of Shunem, which the prophet so often visited in his walks, and where he raised the Shunamite woman's son to life.

Often when I had sat at church in England, listening to the reading of the ninth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, I had been struck with its excessively dramatic character, when Jehu was anointed to be king over Israel in the room of

Joram, and when at the head of his company he was observed, by the watchmen on the towers of Jezreel, directing his headlong course over the broad plain of Esdraelon towards that city: and now with redoubled force did that chapter recur to me, as I stood on the heights of Jezreel with the whole scene before me, barring the presence of Jehu and his chariots. One difficulty which had always presented itself was now removed—*viz.*, how the different watchmen, who had been despatched at long intervals from Jezreel with messages to Jehu, who was “driving furiously” towards the city, managed all of them to arrive, to deliver their messages, and to fall into the rear of his train; and yet that so long an interval should elapse before he actually arrived at the city, that Joram had time to collect an escort befitting his station as king, and go forth to meet him. I say this difficulty was done away with, for I now saw, that as Jehu had to cross the whole extent of the great plain of Esdraelon, he must have been observed coming by the watchmen two full hours before he could arrive at the city, which would have given Joram ample time to have dispatched his several messengers, and also to have summoned his soldiers, when the chariots had approached so near the city that the watch

men were able to announce them, by their being so furiously driven, to belong to Jehu the son of Nimshi.

Descending from Jezreel, and skirting the eastern extremity of Esdraelon, we passed through the village of Shunem, at the foot of Hermon, and rounding a shoulder of that mountain, we came in sight of Mount Tabor, with the village of Nain not far from us on our right.

An hour after noon we arrived at Deberath, a village at the foot of Tabor, and where we pitched our tents under some olive trees. After resting for an hour, we commenced the ascent of the mountain, by no means a difficult one, occupying us about an hour. The whole mountain side, but especially towards the summit, is thickly foliaged with the holm-oak and the arbutus; and among the high grass grow so many rare and beautiful flowers, that it seemed like walking through the most carefully tended pleasure grounds in England. The summit is a piece of table-land covered with ruins, and almost every description of tree and shrub. We spent an hour or so enjoying the extensive prospect; and in examining the ruins, which cover a large area, we traced in many places the remains of walls, and at intervals of towers and bastions. In the

centre we penetrated into several vaulted chambers; whilst running nearly all round was a deep and wide moat, crossed in some places by stone bridges. Tradition has fixed this mountain as the scene of the Transfiguration, and it is therefore the resort of numbers of pilgrims; to which latter fact countless bits of old boots, and remnants of pocket-handkerchiefs hanging from the lower branches of all the trees, bear witness.*

* It is the custom of pilgrims in the East always to leave behind them small portions of their wearing apparel, as mementos of their visits to different holy places.

N. B. It is a good thing that those of our own countrymen who are given to inscribing their names wherever they go, are sufficiently educated to enable them to dispense with such a custom. I need hardly say, that an elm-tree bedizened with the corners of thousands of pocket-handkerchiefs presents a considerably more ludicrous appearance than even a garden-seat covered with initials.

CHAP. XXVII.

NAZARETH.

ONE never appreciates English scenery so much as when its counterpart is stumbled upon some few thousand miles away from the white cliffs of our dear old Island. Without fear of contradiction, I assert that all the country round Mount Tabor, and thence in a northerly direction towards Galilee, might, with every reason, be quoted as, if possible, surpassing what even we fastidious people in England would be induced unqualifyingly to praise.

We were in our saddles shortly after sunrise, and, skirting round the base of Tabor, rode on towards Galilee. Shady valleys watered by tiny brooks, which raced sparkling from the mountain above us along their cool depths, ushered us down great woodland aisles on to broad park-like plains timbered with sturdy oaks; across the glades gleamed brightly in the morning sun birds of every variety and plumage; skylarks shook their feathered throats,

as, fluttering for a moment at our feet, they soared singing upwards into the cloudless sky; whilst high over our heads, but often approaching within range of our guns, circled royally, and with undisguised contempt for our powder-flasks and shot-belts, that king of birds, the eagle.

At times we found ourselves winding up densely wooded hill-sides, our horses with difficulty forcing for themselves a passage through the brake and tall hilfeh grass; whilst our mules could be heard with their tinkling bells far in the rear, quite lost to view, but sometimes appearing one at a time, as they emerged in single file from among the bushes, lingering for a moment upon a little promontory of mossy rock, before plunging again into the thicket that lay between us. High above us, the barrels of their guns continually flashing among the trees as they caught the sun, scampered in twos and threes our light-hearted, eternally-singing muleteers, the end and object of their lives being always to take "short cuts."

We too were in the best of spirits; and as we cantered on, whenever we came to an opening ahead of the caravan, in common with all other living things, we revelled joyously in the delicious warmth of a Syrian morning sun.

A little after noon we gained the summit of a hill immediately over Tiberias, commanding a most lovely view of the town, surrounded with old walls and fast crumbling towers, which, jutting out a few yards into the lake, have for centuries been reflected on the glassy surface of "deep Galilee."

Another hour saw us encamped about half a mile to the south of the town, on the edge of the lake, our tent pegs almost washed by its tiny waves, and close to the baths which were erected some few years back by Ibrahim Pasha, over some hot springs. From our tent-doors we looked upon a truly beautiful picture: to the left the old town with its towers seemed as if reposing on the surface of the calm lake; in the centre, at the distance of forty miles, the interval charmingly diversified with the slopes and broken summits of numerous lesser mountains, rose the snowy summit of Gebel-el-sheikh, the great mountain, or, as it is better known to travellers, the Hermon of the Bible; whilst the right was filled in, on the further side of the lake, with the rugged and still inhospitable country of the Anazees or Gadarenes.

After bathing, we strolled along the banks in the sunset, making bouquets of the numerous beautiful flowers which abound here, occasionally giving assis-

tance to one of our party, a most indefatigable entomologist, in chasing rare butterflies, and other field sports.

Between our encampment and the town we observed many broken columns, and large stones lying in the lake, a few feet from the shore. These are the sole remnants that we saw of the city whither our Saviour so often resorted from his native town of Nazareth, but still the view we had from our tent-doors was the same as ever : the icy summit of Hermon towered glistening up into the blue sky, the same to-day as in the time of the Psalmist; and stretching along the opposite shore lay the country of the Gadarenes, uninviting and barren as in the days of our Saviour.

The town itself, which from a distance looks poverty-stricken and ruinous in the extreme, offered us no temptation to examine its interior, the more so as Mohammad, when first we came in sight of it this morning, became visibly agitated, shrugging his shoulders and turning up his nose, at the same time turning to us, and saying, "Voyez vous, Monsieur, cette mauvaise ville? le roi des puces y demeure." Now considering that we had kept up for the last four months a running fire of maledictions upon his innumerable subjects in other parts of Syria and in

Egypt, we felt that to approach the very court of his Majesty would be to pass the Rubicon of swearing, and go mad at once.

The reason that the town of Tiberias has fallen to so low an ebb of misery, was an earthquake of a very terrible character which visited this city in the year A.D. 1837; and as yet the inhabitants have hardly moved a finger to repair the damages then incurred. Massive walls lie either shattered on the ground, or stand rent asunder in a dozen different places, whilst numerous heaps of rubbish mark the spots where once stood houses.

Leaving the blue depths of Galilee behind us on the next morning, and riding southwards, we came, after six hours, to the village of Cana, prettily situated in a hollow, and surrounded with groves of pomegranate trees, diversified with numerous acacias and carob trees, beneath the shade of which we lunched, and gave our poor horses some rest, who were nearly teased to madness by the flies.

Cana is inhabited almost entirely by Greek Christians, and as their Easter festivals were going on, we were unable to see what is generally shown to travellers; among other things, one of the water-pots, from which was poured the miraculously made wine. I cannot say that I took this disappointment very

much to heart, for I almost doubt my being able to have credited its identity.

Another two hours' riding brought us over a mountain of some elevation down into Nazareth, where we pitched our tents beneath some olives just outside the town, instead of going to the convent. Before sitting down to dinner our dragoman came to us with a troubled countenance, to say that the only fountain whence we could obtain water, that of the Virgin, was in the hands of the Turkish soldiers, who would not permit our servants to draw without an order from their colonel. Accordingly to his quarters we repaired, where he received us most courteously; and pipes and coffee having been discussed, and compliments exchanged, we stated the cause of our visit. Of course, as we anticipated, he was only too proud, considering the assistance that the English were rendering his lord and master the Sultan at Constantinople, to be of any service to us, and immediately dispatched a soldier with an order to allow our men to draw to their hearts' content. In return for his politeness, we asked to be honoured with a visit in the evening, which he complied with; and eschewing wine-glasses, drank so much raw brandy from a tea-cup, that he perfectly astonished us by wishing us good night about eleven o'clock, P. M., and walking toler-

ably erect out of the tent without support of any kind.

The next day being Sunday we remained encamped—a proceeding which was much approved of by our muleteers, who, being Greek Christians, preferred spending their Easter thus, to trudging after our horses for nine or ten hours beneath a hot sun. This day will be remembered by the different members of our party, among other incidents, for a “grand junction dinner,” of which we partook in the cool of the evening outside the tents.

Forming two parties, each with our own servants, our custom had ever been to dine separately, and to indulge in a pleasant *réunion* afterwards over a rubber at whist; but to-day being Sunday and the Greek Easter, and being encamped at Nazareth, and for various other weighty as well as trifling reasons, we agreed that we should all dine *en masse*, and that the two cooks, each of whom fancied himself the best in existence, should try and outdo each other. Halîfa and Harôun, as the two were named, kept us in one continued roar of laughter the whole time: the excitement under which each laboured to elicit our praises was something fearful! It was agreed that each should take it in turn to provide the various dishes; that is to say, Halîfa was to make the soup,

and that by the time *that* was discussed, Harôun should have something else, a pilaff or a ragout, in readiness, and so on. If they had kept to this arrangement, all would have passed off quietly enough, but as *celerity* seemed to them the great thing, our meal became a scene of the greatest confusion; for as Harôun had concocted his pilaff before the soup was ready (each had his own cooking apparatus), Halîfa detected him trying to dish up before his right turn came: this made the latter bounce up to us to expostulate, and then in the middle of his sentence off he rushed to bring the soup as it was: a neck and neck race then ensued, the pilaff winning by about a second. Then came an animated discussion, Halîfa declaring that we ought to have the soup first, because he had been told to lead off; Harôun imploring us to eat his pilaff, because he had been able to put it on the table first: then, without waiting to see what we were going to do, they hurried back to their several fires, to try and outstrip each other in the next course. I need hardly say, that they cooked enough things to have lasted us a week, though, if they had only supplied us with food enough for an hour, we should never have consumed it in that time for laughing. Towards night our meal drew to a close; and bestowing an equal amount of praise on

each, we managed to pacify their ruffled tempers, though I fancy they looked at each other with green eyes for several days afterwards.

Strolling about after dinner in the vicinity of the tents, just at that interval when in the East you may actually watch the struggle between night and day, and see the former advancing with rapidly increasing strides across the plain, flinging the heavy folds of its black mantle after the latter, which, retreating to the very mountain tops, lingers there but a few short moments, as if to impart what little light it has remaining to the myriads of stars above, which are seen in another quarter of an hour shivering far and wide across the dark vault of heaven — just at this interval, hearing the clatter of a horse's hoofs, and the sound of an enquiring voice in the road beneath, I turned in that direction, and was shortly after met by my Polish friend of the Nile, who had come from Jerusalem by sea, and had ridden across from the port of Caiffa, at the foot of Mount Carmel, in order to visit the shrine at Nazareth, where hearing that we were encamped in the neighbourhood, he had ridden out in order to ask me to come and dine with him at the convent. A very few words sufficed me to explain the impossibility of such a proceeding; but for sociability's sake, I

followed him to his quarters in the town, and passed the remainder of the evening with him over cigarettes and coffee. When I again turned out to retrace my steps to our encampment, it was so intensely dark, that if I had not been sure of my way, I should have been very doubtful of my chance of falling in with my tent before sunrise. As it was, I declined the accompaniment of his servant with a lantern, and wished him a cheerful good-night. I had hardly advanced fifty yards and turned three or four corners, before I found myself completely puzzled as to how to proceed next; and whilst stumbling on, managed to kick up a dog which lay asleep across the road. With a snarl and a growl the animal trotted off, but not before he had roused another dog hard by into a low bark. Some other dog hearing this, felt it his duty, I suppose, to carry on the conversation, so he barked also, but more loudly than the last. Immediately on this several others, unwilling that the ball should stop rolling, threw in a chorus in right good earnest. Very conscious of my perilous position so late at night, and without a lantern, if the animals should once begin to collect, and so encourage each other to attack me, I turned round without a moment's hesitation and walked back towards the convent. But a walk

was soon changed to a run, for by this time all the dogs in Nazareth were awake, and were racing down every street, hardly able to keep their growls in their mouths, so eager did they seem to bite somebody. I need hardly say that it was not very long before I was standing on the door-step of the convent; and as the light streamed out through the open door, it shone into the eyes and among the teeth of about thirty wolf-like animals, crowding together under the opposite wall ready for anything. Imploring now to be provided with what a few moments before I had rejected, I walked back in safety through the town, for though one dog may almost be brave enough to attack you in the dark, a lantern will put a hundred of them to flight. People accustomed only to English dogs will hardly understand the danger I was in; but these animals in the East partake more of the nature of the wolf, and though arrant cowards in single combat, they are able to collect in such large numbers that they quickly spur each other on to commit any enormity. In proof of this there is a story told in Cairo of three men who, walking down to the river late at night without a lantern, were attacked by some dogs, who, collecting to the fearful number of three hundred, fell upon them, and

before any help could arrive, had completely eaten them up.

Rising on Monday morning none the worse for our enormous dinner of the preceding evening, we got into our saddles two full hours before sunrise, and striking into a road which led over the hills at the back of Nazareth, we rode on ahead of the mules towards Mount Carmel.

After some time we came to where the road divided on the right towards Acre: here we paused, in order to send the mules under the charge of Mohammad to the latter town, with orders to pitch the tents on the sea-shore, a few hundred yards from the walls; and then again pursuing our course to Mount Carmel, we rode for about two hours through a second edition of the Tabor park-land, studded with oaks. The morning mist, which had hung heavily to the mountain side on leaving Nazareth, so as to render the air quite chilly, was now rapidly clearing away, or, where it still remained, was so saturated with the warm glow of the early sun, that as we looked down through it among the intervening trees upon the plain beneath, we amused ourselves with fancying the scene to be one of Danby's pictures, "Sunrise near Nazareth."

After descending into the plain, four hours' riding,

with the sea always in sight, and the range of Carmel on our left, brought us to Câiffa, a small town built close on to the sea, much in the style of those on the Corniche road between Genoa and Nice, and which had often struck me, when travelling between those two places, as presenting a semi-Italian, semi-Oriental appearance. Continuing our ride through its single narrow street, and traversing the wooded plain on the further side, we arrived at the foot of Mount Carmel, the bluff promontory of a long mountain ridge, which running out to sea for some distance, forms the southernmost side of the Bay of Acre. A very tolerable road leads up from the plain to the summit, upon which stands the famous Carmelite Convent of St. Elias. Rather more than seven hours after leaving Nazareth, we dismounted at the doors, and were most courteously received by the Padre Carlo, a personage well known to all travellers by this route. As he concluded we were hungry, he jokingly proposed to try what the refectory could supply us with; "but first," he said, "you would like to wash your hands;" and so saying, he conducted us through a succession of pretty little bedrooms, nicely furnished, leaving one of us in each: but as there were many more bedrooms than there were

of us, he was saved the trouble of resorting to any expedient for stowing us all away, as the book of riddles and conundrums has it of the old lady, who managed to put *ten* gentlemen into *nine* bedrooms, giving each a separate apartment.

By and by we all sat down to a leg of mutton and potatoes, the good Padre presiding, and amusing us the while with French anecdotes of the convent, its various visitors, and himself. When we had finished, he took us over the convent. The massive simplicity, so to speak, of its design, and all its arrangements, pleased us excessively, but especially the chapel, which being quite devoid of tapestry and all superfluous ornament, formed a striking contrast to the numerous Greek and Latin Churches, of which we had lately seen so much in Jerusalem, and which are so loaded with tapestry, gilding, and painting as to produce a most painful effect. The form of the chapel was circular, beneath a dome with four deep recesses, one on each side, occupied by altars: a few steps below the high altar led us down into the so-called grotto of St. Elias, hewn out of the natural rock, unadorned by tapestry of any kind, the only attempt at display being four silver lamps, which are kept constantly burning, to shed their united light upon a simple

shrine. On the left of this grotto we were shown the spot (the sarcophagus having been removed) where the remains of Matilda, Queen of Richard Cœur de Lion, were interred.

Before taking leave of the Padre (for we purposed sleeping in our tents, beneath the walls of St. Jean d'Acre), we ascended to the flat roof of the convent, which commands a view of the entire bay, and what was once considered the impregnable town of Acre. It was from this position that the Padre told us he was a spectator of the siege in 1840, and of the final blowing up of the magazine.

Thanking him for all his attention, and leaving a donation in the convent box, we again mounted our horses, and descending into the plain; and retracing our steps through Câiffa, we rode along the sands the whole way to Acre, a distance of about ten miles, enjoying the soft evening air, and amusing ourselves with bathing our horses' feet in the small waves, as they broke upon the shore. As we had given orders to Mohammad to encamp near the sea, we fully expected to find the tents pitched and our tea ready on arrival, so that our vexation, after a long day's ride, was great at finding no traces of either mules or tents. Thinking they might have mistaken our directions, and have encamped

on the other side of the town, we rode thither ; but still nothing was either to be seen or heard, save a few herons and the distant murmur of the city ; so we rode back, to have another look on the other side, but again we found ourselves all alone, this time without the herons. Rapidly the sun went down, throwing a flood of light along the calm sea, gilding the shattered walls of Acre, and crimsoning a few fleecy clouds, which seemed to have risen from some nether world, as if to receive him for the night, and, in the absence of twilight, it soon became perfectly dark.

As it was now getting serious, we proposed dividing, and sending Achmed, our friend's dragoman, off in another direction, to scour about, shouting "Mohammad !" agreeing, in the event of either party meeting with success, to make the sea our trysting-place.

A few minutes served to separate us all in different directions, and I found myself riding quite alone, in anything but a serene state of mind ; my horse stumbling continually over a stone, or putting his foot in a hole. Coming every now and then to a pause, I listened long and painfully for the well-known sounds of our camp, the singing of our muleteers, or Mahommad's angry tones, as he bestowed

his usual amount of kicks upon the cook; but all that came to break the stillness of the night, save my own voice, were those of my different companions, sometimes afar off, and sometimes nearer, shouting the word which we had agreed upon, coupled with a few English expletives. After a time, I made my way back again to the sea with much difficulty, for it was so dark that I could but just make out the outline of my horse's head. By degrees, each having met with the like success, we were all collected with the exception of Achmed, whom we now seemed to have lost as well as the tents.

As it was now really getting late, we determined to procure a lodging of some kind in the town, rather than sleep out upon the sands; but when we came to the gates, we found them closed for the night, and the only answer that we could get, after a quarter of an hour's knocking and shouting, was something to the effect of "taking ourselves off." As we had no 84-pounders to enforce our demands for admittance, we were obliged to raise the siege, and return to the sea. Achmed still not having made his appearance, we concluded that he must have fallen in with Mohammad, so, as a last resource, we determined to strike inland, along the road which

he had taken, and then, if this failed, to make the best of some trees, and go supperless to sleep.

After riding along for some distance in silence, what was our joy to hear Achmed's voice, shouting "Ya Howadji!" We quickly responded, and presently came up with him, accompanied by Mohammad. Our first remark was brimming with exasperation, as we asked Mohammad where on earth he had stowed away the tents; nor was our wrath appeased by the cheerful way in which he answered, "Ah, Messieurs, je suis ravi de vous voir; j'ai cru certainement que vous étiez perdus, et vous voila! les tentes sont dans un endroit bien joli, d'ici une demi heure précisément, où est le jardin d'Abdallah Pasha."* We were perfectly speechless with anger, so, following him in silence, we came, after forty minutes' sharp walking, to our encampment, very tired, but so hungry, that we almost forgave Mohammad on account of the relish with which we devoured our suppers.

* I give our dragoman's answer in the language in which he always addressed us, though, if it is not as perfect as it should be, I would rather the reader laid it at his door, albeit, that I believe Mohammad's French was faultless.

CHAP. XXVIII.

LEBANON.

WHEN in its palmy days, Acre must have been an exceedingly handsome city, and it is melancholy in the extreme to see how totally it has been bereft of all its pride. Passing under a large and somewhat heavy gateway, we strolled along its almost deserted street, flanked on either side by loftier and more substantial buildings than I remember to have seen any where else in the East, and at length reached the bazaars. In these arcades were centred all the bustle and activity of the town, which consisted of a few women going their rounds selling bread, about *two* sellers of stuffs sitting listlessly smoking over their unheeded wares, a barber who seemed about to shave himself for want of a customer, and half a dozen dogs lying asleep wherever a gleam of sunshine found its way on to the ground through the torn roof. Fearful of being seized with the "blues," we hurried away towards the ramparts; but here, more than ever, destruction and desolation stared us in the face. Wherever we turned, ruined houses, large

heaps of rubbish, and tottering walls told a terrible tale of what British cannon had done. In one unfortunate house, whose only merit was that it still stood upright, we counted no less than twelve gunshot wounds, in one of which the ball still rested.

Leaving Acre, we continued to ride all the morning along the sea, though at times we mounted along the rocks to a great height above it. During the afternoon we passed the famous "ladder of Tyre," which was made by Alexander the Great, and consists of a succession of steps, or rather ledges in the rock, carrying the road over an immensely high cliff. At 5 P.M., we encamped in a field not far from the sea, about a mile to the south of Tyre.

The next morning, having sent on the baggage to Saida, or Sidon, a day's journey hence along the coast, we mounted our horses and rode into Tyre, or Sûr, as it is now called.

The modern town still stands on the same island, which was converted into a peninsula by Alexander's mole, where once dwelt the merchant kings of Tyre. Riding along its scantily peopled, though, for an Eastern town, its scrupulously clean and symmetrical streets, we presently arrived at its furthest extremity, a distance, I should suppose, of nearly a mile. Here dismounting, and climbing among the

rocks down to the sea, we looked upon all that remains of Tyre and its isles. That once magnificent city, whose ports gave shelter to the world's fleets, whose buildings were palaces, and whose inhabitants were princes, lies buried here; and Time is rapidly destroying the very monuments which he himself raised to her memory along the shore over which she once reigned — to wit, many columns and sculptured blocks of stone, over and around which the blue waves of the Mediterranean ceaselessly break and eddy, and among which the fisherman moors his boat, as he engages in his daily occupation.

Leaving Tyre, and passing beyond the isthmus, we gradually left the sea, and in little more than an hour's riding across the plain, we arrived at a broad and deep river, called by the Arabs *Nar-el-Casmia*. Crossing it by means of a fine bridge, consisting of a single arch, we again approached the sea, and in three hours arrived at *Sarafend*, or *Sarepta*, the *Zarephath* of the Old Testament, a ruinous village, not far from the sea, built on the slope of a hill, where dwelt *Elijah* with the widow, whose son he raised to life. Near to *Sarafend* we passed a small *Khân*, where for a minute we thought of resting our horses and eating our lunch; but it was so hot, and the sea looked and sounded so refreshing, that we

continued on thither, and indulged our bodies externally as well as internally.

Our road now lay the whole way along the sea to Sidon, the scenery as we approached it getting more beautiful and fertile every step nearly that we took, till at length the town itself burst upon our view, with the old citadel on the summit of a hill to the left, said to have been built by Louis IX., A. D. 1253. Embosomed in a forest of freshly green trees, among which glittered in the sun the gilded crescents of the various mosques, the consular flags fluttering gaily in the breeze, we indulged in many an exclamation of delight as we rode along, unanimously pronouncing Saida indeed a beautiful place. As we approached, we fell in with numberless holiday groups — ladies mounted on gorgeously caparisoned donkeys, and dressed in cerise-colored balloons, their absurdly thin lace yasmuks pending so coquettishly from beneath their large kohl-tinted eyes, that if they had only lived in the Middle Ages, their lords would probably have spent the greater part of the twenty-four hours in hurling their gloves at all strangers whom they deemed gazing with too curious an eye on the pretty mouths but half-concealed beneath; sober grey-bearded Turks, also mounted on donkeys, to all appearance filling the capacity of husbands to the

cherry-colored balloons beside which they rode, and who, if they *had* lived in the Middle Ages, would have done more wisely by keeping their gloves on, than by throwing them at any one likely to pick them up; and besides the ladies and the old men, there were young men mounted on fiery but ill-conditioned horses, whose ears and tails were but just discernible, by reason of their gigantic saddles and extensive bridles.

Just before entering the city, we passed an old Roman column lying by the road-side, on which we traced a Latin inscription, containing the names of Septimus, Severus, and Pertinax, which Maundrell, who travelled this way 200 years ago, gives in his account of his wanderings. Passing through the cemetery, bright with oleanders and shaded by numerous acacias, and riding through the outskirts of the city, we encamped on the further side, close to the sea, beneath a tamarisk tree.

Sidon is still a fine bustling town, built on the rise of the hill, whose summit is crowned by the castle of Louis IX.

Like all Eastern towns, its streets are crooked and very narrow, and rendered more than usually dark by the lofty stone houses which line them on either side. Though our stroll through it was made early

in the morning, we found the bazaars, unlike those of Acre and Tyre, already crowded and noisy with the dense throng of Mussulmen and Greeks, who seemed to be "hard at it," making their bargains before the heat of the day commenced. In different parts of the city are several large khâns, for the use of merchants and travellers; but as we preferred encamping in the country, we made no use of any one of them. In walking along the sea, on the northern side of the town, we observed in many parts, half buried in the sand, traces of the old city, granite columns and large foundation stones.

Whilst our breakfast was being prepared, I employed myself at the tent door in making a sketch of this side (the northern) of the city, the centre of the picture consisting of a quaint old bridge supported by heavy buttresses, connecting the city with a most picturesque old fortress of Saracenic architecture, evidently once a place of great strength, though now much dilapidated. At the foot of the bridge stands a large important-looking building, with all the appearance of an English warehouse, though, on our voyage of discovery through the city, we found that it was a barrack-house for the Turkish soldiery.

Saida and its vicinity being well supplied with

water, the whole adjoining plain is occupied by the most beautifully cultivated gardens, dense groves of orange and pomegranate trees, and orchards producing almost all our English fruit—peaches, pears, apricots, cherries, &c.—extending even to the foot of the magnificent range of the Lebanon, which here begins to assert a supremacy over everything.

Fearful of turning the weakest of Sybarites in the midst of such luxuries, and also wishing soon to reach Damascus, we once more put our caravan in motion; and taking leave for a time of the sea, we commenced to toil among the steep passes of Lebanon, and at length attained such a height that, on looking back for a last view of Saida, which we had left with so much regret, it seemed to us more like a toy town—its white houses sparkling in the sun, and their bases washed by the waves of the Mediterranean; these broke upon the shore at so great a depth below, that, though we could plainly discern the long white line of foam, their sound failed to reach us.

After two hours of the roughest riding, we passed close under the castle of Djouni, the residence of the late Lady Hester Stanhope. It stands on the summit of a crag which rises alone in the centre of a large mountain basin, the valley below being

filled with mulberry trees. Our friends' dragoman, Achmed, who had been in her service when a little boy, as a chibouque-ji, or pipe-bearer, and had lived with her many years, amused us by pointing out all the different localities that bore upon the history of the Arab queen, as we rode along, with anecdotes of her mode of life, but which I omit recording, as they were only such as we, and I suppose every one, had heard before. At half-past five, P. M., we encamped on a high piece of table-land, commanding a fine panorama of the surrounding mountains, not far from the Druse village of Kephre-el-Nebrach, after having been in our saddles, clambering up mountain gorges, for ten hours and three-quarters.

Fortunately for us the Lebanon, which is so continually the scene of fighting and of bloodshed between the rival sects of the Maronites and the Druses, was now quiet, so that we were able to travel where we chose, without fear of being robbed. These two sects form almost the entire population of these mountainous districts: they are ever at war with each other, and, secure in their rugged fastnesses, they set the people of the plain at defiance, holding themselves to be decidedly their superiors.

The Maronites are the most devout Christians, and are said to reverence the pope more deeply than any

other Catholics in the world. Their demeanour towards us as travellers, wherever we fell in with them, was courteous in the extreme; nor would they ever permit us to pass through their villages without imploring us to go and see their churches, and assist in their devotions.

The Druses, though once the masters of Lebanon, have been forced to give way before the lately increasing power of the Maronites; though such is still their *esprit de corps*, that a single Druse will smite himself proudly on the chest, and confessing "I am a Druse!" will undertake to fight any *four* Maronites. The rites and ceremonies, even the principles of their religion, they keep a profound secret, but profess to sympathise with the Mussulmen, and hold for their deity, Hákim, the mad Caliph of Egypt.

At six in the morning we were again in our saddles, and, riding through the lovely wady or valley of Barook, and continuing to ascend, we arrived at ten, A. M., at the highest point of the pass, 6000 feet above the sea level. Here we paused a moment, to rest our tired horses and to enjoy the view, which was truly perfect. Behind us we looked over Djouni towards Saida and far away out to sea, across the blue expanse of the Mediterranean: on

our left, above the higher summits of the range, rose the snow-capped mountain of Gebel-el-Sheikh, which was seen apparently quite close when at Tiberias: before us, on the further side of a broad and fertile plain, rose the heights of Anti-Lebanon; whilst far away southwards we fancied we could make out the blue mountains of Judæa. After drinking some goat's milk and brandy, the former of which we obtained by the payment of a few piastres from some Bedouins engaged here in feeding their flocks, we commenced our descent into the plain. The mountain side being clothed with oak orchards, we secured a little shelter from the heat of the sun, which was intense.

About this time I discovered, strange as it may seem, that my horse, which from various causes, such as being off his feed, striking himself, and getting more meagre every day, had been an object of much anxiety to me ever since leaving Jerusalem, unlike all other horses, preferred going *up* hill to *down*. He reminded me, though the movement was a *vice versâ* one, of the eccentricities of the pilgrims in the Desert, who, towards the close of the day, when they began to get tired, abandoned all idea of following the direct road, and, careless where they went, made a point of always going down hill, when-

ever an opportunity occurred, quite forgetting that for every *descent* they would have to make an *ascent*. After much anxious thought and observation, I found out why my horse was such an anomaly; his crupper was so short, and the saddle so large and heavy, that the slightest descent nearly cut the poor animal's tail off. Of course, I at once hurried to his relief by ridding him altogether of his crupper; and though the only obstacle in the way of his going down hill was now removed, yet still his old habit stuck by him, and often, when riding along the streets of Damascus, if I stopped to speak either to one of our servants or a friend, I detected my steed gradually edging his fore legs on to the raised footway, so as to produce the effect in his mind of going up hill. When we had finished our descent of the mountain, we struck across the plain by the village of Yûb-Yanîn, and encamped, after a most fatiguing ride of ten hours and a half, a little before sunset, at Aithy, a village prettily situated on the first slopes of the range of Anti-Lebanon.

To-day for the first time we saw some women adorned with those curious head-dresses, which one always associates with a journey through the Holy Land, consisting of a silver horn, most elaborately chased, exactly the shape of a ship's speaking

trumpet, and is worn on the forehead in a projecting position, after the manner of unicorns: a white veil attached to the top, and hanging down on either side, gives to the wearer a rather picturesque appearance, though I cannot say I much admired either the horns or the veils.

Having persuaded our muleteers to make one day's journey of it, from Aithy to Damascus, instead of two, as the custom is, we started, on the third morning after leaving Saida, at half-past five, and leaving the village of Rasheia on our right, we soon after entered the Wady Haloue, in parts of which were nearly perpendicular rocks, rising to a height of 300 feet, not more than a stone's throw apart. Along its depths, among dense groves of mulberry trees, rushed a mountain stream, brightly reflecting the first rays of the sun. Arrived at the further extremity of the Wady, we toiled on till noon among the steep limestone passes of Anti-Lebanon, nearly blinded by the sun's fierce glare, as well as baked by its intense heat.

We next found ourselves on some high table-land overlooking a broad plain at our feet, shut in on all sides by mountains; the usual road for travellers lay to the left off this plain; but the quickest mode of reaching Damascus was by crossing it, which the

muleteers were very much against, on account of its being Anazee or Bedouin country, belonging to some ferocious tribes, who were always at war with the Sultan, and paid no respect to the property or to the persons of Europeans travelling with his passports. However, as we had come so far, and we much wished to reach Damascus before the closing of the gates at sunset, we determined to risk the transit. From the height at which we stood, we could easily distinguish in many parts of the plain their black canvass encampments; so that it was with fear and trembling that we slowly wound down the mountain-side, and getting our baggage into something like military order, and establishing ourselves as guards about it, we commenced our march through the robber country. From the height at which we stood the plain seemed perfectly level, but we found, now that we were upon it, that there were many mounds and gentle declivities along which we could travel in safety, without being observed, unless they had detected us in the first instance in our descent; and this they would hardly have done except with the aid of glasses. To our great satisfaction, we reached the further side without interruption, and then again journeying on among the limestone rocks, we arrived at the last mountain pass, from which

point our eyes ranged in a moment of time over the whole vast plain of Damascus, stretching far away for hundreds of miles, with scarce an interruption, as far as the Euphrates and Bagdad the Beautiful. Beneath us, at a distance of four or five miles, lay Damascus itself, "Scham-el-Shereef," as it is lovingly called, "the great and holy city," lying long and snake-like amid a very sea of foliage, its white houses, tapering minarets, and swelling mosque domes glittering in the sunshine among the trees. The whole scene, far and near, bathed in all the rapidly changing hues of a Syrian sunset, was so surpassingly lovely, that in the words of Mahomet, as he drew near to its walls, we exclaimed, "This is too delicious!"

Descending into the plain, we passed many coffee-houses, from out of which issued loud cries, worded in a mixture of Arabic and Italian, to partake of the various refreshments which it was their business to dispense to all thirsty worshippers of Mahomet, "*Ya Howadji! taal-e-hinna! venite qua! questo buono, taib, si signori!*" Presently we plunged into the dense forest in which the city lies so deeply set.

For an hour we continued to ride through it, and so massively did the trees meet arching over our

heads, as to exclude every gleam of sunshine. It is impossible for me to describe the pleasurable sensations with which we suddenly entered these cool retreats; for the whole day we had been toiling among glaring white limestone passes, exposed without a means of escape to the fierce rays of the sun, which streamed down upon us in all their scorching intensity; and now, unwinding the cloths which had bound our heads, and once more seeing clearly and breathing freely, we drank in copious draughts of the cool breezes which played across our path from among the trees. From a noontide silence, so perfect that our very temples broke it with their throbbing, we now listened with delight to the rush and plashing of streams innumerable, as they ran sparkling by, dividing off into as many innumerable directions. Still riding on, we passed many gardens and fruit orchards; and occasionally catching sunny peeps of the city, down long vistas of Spanish chesnut trees, we at last arrived at the gates. For a few minutes, as we rode through the suburbs, we again met the sun face to face, though declining day had subdued its power, and then we again lost it, as we entered the labyrinth of straggling bazaars of which the principal part of Damascus is composed. We dismounted in the outer court of the only hotel

in the city, after having been eleven hours and a half on the road ; and, sending the mules and horses to the nearest khân, we hurried away to dispel the fatigues and heats of the last few days in a Turkish bath.

CHAP. XXIX.

DAMASCUS.

So far as size and importance go, Damascus cannot compare with Cairo : but the latter has become so Europeanized since the days of Mohammad Ali and the Indian transit, that all those dreams of Eastern luxury and romance in which it is the wont of travellers to indulge, as they steam up the Mediterranean towards the sunrising, are only to be realized in all their hoped-for sweetness in the former. The few days which I spent in the cool shade of the Damascus bazaars so completely Orientalized me, that I seemed to look back into my past English life as one would do among the pages of some intimate friend's journal. For four days we did little else than wander here and there in the bazaars, those long Moorish arcades, which, branching into and off from one another, constitute the entire city, and along which, from sunrise till late in the afternoon, keep ever streaming, silently busy, the gaily-dressed inhabitants thereof. No grooms here, as in Cairo, came

shouting and brandishing their whips, for the people to make way for an English clarence containing ladies in "bonnets," or for a mail-phæton driven by a gentleman in a "hat." Save the cry of the sherbet-seller, and the ringing of his brass cups, as he invited the passers-by to drink of his lemon, rose, or almond syrups, no other sound came to break the even murmur, which, emanating from the crowds beneath, seemed to hang among the rafters of the Damascus bazaars.

Many hours of the day we spent in the different khâns for which this city is famous, and where dwell the merchants with their silk stuffs and gold work, destined to be transported in travellers' portmanteaus, as they were in ours, to adorn the drawing-rooms and persons of ladies in England.

The various khâns in Damascus are named after the Sultans who built them, and are, without exception, magnificent buildings. They adjoin the bazaars, and are entered through ponderous gateways, on either side of which, as at the Horse-Guards in Whitehall, stands a mule of extraordinary dimensions splendidly caparisoned, acting in the stead of a sign-board. On passing the gateway, you find yourself in a large court, open to the sky, in the centre of which is a fountain. A cloister runs round the court,

in the shade of which sit collected into groups, smoking their pipes, or wrangling about a piastre, the camel-drivers and muleteers in the service of the merchants lodging in the khân. The walls are generally built of alternate black, red, or white slabs of marble, like an Italian duomo. At each corner of the cloister a stone staircase leads up into a gallery running entirely round, and looking into the courtyard below. On to this gallery open the rooms occupied by the merchant: and here it was that we used to sit, inhaling clouds of tumbak from the bubbling nargiléh, sipping iced sherbets, and listening to the plash of the fountain below, or in making offers for gold-embroidered tablecloths.

Strolling out into the bazaars, we used to amuse ourselves in practising what little Arabic we were masters of, bargaining for trifles which we knew we should throw away on the morrow. Often were we interrupted by some old duenna, who, guarding a black silk balloon, which we felt sure contained the pretty wife of some jealous Mussulman, and closely veiled herself, exchanged a few whispers with the seller of stuffs, and then retired, the purchaser of some strange article of female dress. Mixing with the crowd, or standing in the gateways of the khâns, we listened to the itinerant vendors of Eastern

curiosities chanting the merits of their different wares, but who failed to crowd the pith of what they said into *three* words, as men of that class have a happy way of doing in England, advising the passenger in a twinkling, as he hurries by them, of the name, merits, and exact price of the article on sale.

At sunset the city goes to sleep, the shops are all closed; and following all our old Arabian Nights' acquaintances, we leave the spice-laden atmosphere of the bazaars, and go back to dine at the hotel. The mere fact of *dining* would seem to hurl us from the summit of that ladder of Eastern romance to which we had ascended during the day; and it doubtless would have done so, had not the hotel itself helped to prolong, and even to add fresh colouring to our day-dreams—with its large court-yard open to the sky, its deep alcoves, furnished with soft divans, and arabesqued in blue and gold, from the marble flooring to the carved ceiling above, with verses from the Korân, and where we used to dine off pilaffs and lamb stuffed with sweetmeats and pistachio nuts, sipping coffee afterwards in the moonlight, where it streamed down among the citron trees into the fountained court, and sent almost to sleep by the soporific bubbling of our nargiléhs.

Dreaming now of Shems-el-nihar and her much-loved prince of Persia; now of that gentleman, who on the first night of his nuptials was whisked all the way from some exceedingly remote place, and deposited in his scanty night-dress, perhaps at the very gates through which we had entered the city; and last of all, and not unfrequently, of that rich Emir, who, falling in love with the beautiful daughter of the Jew, carried her off from the streets of Damascus, to his mountain palace in the Lebanon, thereby rendering his once solitary home the abode of happiness and love, till in an evil hour came the lady with the "cold heart;"—dreaming of all these tales of romance, which we had read in childhood, and which now seemed to start up before us in sober reality, we used to watch the shadows of the orange trees mount higher and higher up the moonlit walls, till they waved in the soft night air against our bedroom windows, and then we used to separate till the morning. Often it chanced that we met before that time, for if the mosquitoes and the heat conspired to render me sleepless, I used to come out to cool myself on the gallery upon which our rooms opened; and looking over into the court-yard below, I was allured by the plash of the fountain, to which I descended, to find

one of my companions quietly sitting there regarding the stars.

The river Barrada, which flows through the centre of Damascus, sending out tributaries in various directions, gives rise to so many fountains and purling streams, that at night, when all is quiet, the whole city murmurs with the rush and fall of waters. All the best coffee-houses are built over these streams, and, embosomed in trees, become the favourite resort of the inhabitants.

The traveller will do well to confine himself to the bazaars and the coffee-houses, for should he venture beyond, into the suburbs, the dirt, the unpleasant odours, and the stifling heat which he will there encounter, will speedily annihilate all the romantic sensations in which he has been indulging, and with his handkerchief to his nose he will make the best of his way back. And yet who would complain? Every rose has its thorns, and the briars of Damascus must be felt by all who would attain to its wonderful sweetness.

We left the city beloved of Mahomet at the close of a week, and in a truly triumphant manner, for it was in company with the Polish nobleman and his beautiful wife, whom I introduced to my readers last at

Nazareth, and in honour of whose departure all imaginable consuls, vice-consuls, and kawasses had turned out in their most gorgeous apparel, preceding our caravan on fiery horses for some little distance out of the city on our road to Baalbec.

CHAP. XXX.

BAALBEC.

A DAY'S journey from Damascus brought us to the range of Anti-Lebanon, over which we crossed down into the broad plain which divides it and the Lebanon.

Whilst riding between these grand mountain ranges, and when we were within a few miles of the ruins of Baalbec, where we intended to encamp for the night, the sky, which had been all day filling with clouds, suddenly burst over our heads, and, without any warning peals, we found ourselves in the midst of a most sublime thunder-storm. The dark masses of cloud, which had hitherto been resting on the mountain tops, came rolling down their sides, deluging us with rain; flash after flash of lightning nearly blinded us, and sent our horses to their wits' end; whilst, from every cavern and gully among the mountains issued rolls of thunder, which, uniting as they came, broke upon the plain in so deafening a crash, that it sounded like the accumulated crises of a hundred of our English storms.

Giving our horses their heads, we allowed them to tear along the road at their own pace; but by the time we arrived at Baalbec it was all over, and again the sun streamed down upon us in all its wonted brightness.

As the mules were not yet arrived, we tied our horses to some trees, and commenced to climb among the ruins, which were quite different to any that I had yet seen. They consist of one enormous temple, covering within a little the same area as that of Karnak on the Nile. Formerly it was surrounded by an arcade of columns, six of which, still standing in an entirely perfect state, now alone in their glory, would seem to be ever gazing mournfully upon the vast scene of desolation around them, lamenting as it were that *they* only remain the sole guarantees of that magnificence of which they once formed but a small part. The temple seems to have been fortified and garrisoned by the Saracens, for we traced the remnants of a wall running round it, the foundation stones of which are enormous: one of them we measured, and found it to be 65 feet in length.

For so huge a building as this temple (which tradition tells us was dedicated to the sun) must have been, one hardly expects to find such a profusion of elaborate work, so much and such delicate specimens

of stone carving, such a succession of the most exquisitely moulded columns; in fact, the whole surface of its area, covered with such telling mementos of the beauty of its original design, and of the chaste perfection with which it was executed, that though one might easily fancy its elegant proportions to have appeared very possible whilst merely floating about the imagination of its architect, yet when the masses of stone which were to aid in swelling out its gigantic bulk began to be practically handled, one cannot help dwelling with admiration upon the courage of the builder, who, when the temple was yet in its infancy, persevered in his great work; and when these heaps of masonry had risen high enough to enclose within their limits spacious halls and corridors and long avenues of columns; and, lastly, when the great Temple of the Sun was finished, and when the priest or the worshipper could wander about its sacred precincts, gazing upon its sculptured walls and at the tracery work of its numerous colonnades; — he, much more than we, who only gazed upon the wreck and ruin of happier days, must have stood in a state of bewilderment, looking up and around upon so vast a pile of building, and yet seeing that every square inch of wall, ceiling, or gateway was so elaborately carved, as to have employed not only

the ideas, but the very manual labour of the artists themselves.

The key-stone of the gateway, which leads over piles of capitals and broken columns into the principal hall, has slipped, probably during an earthquake, from its original position, and hangs ever on the point of crushing all who pass beneath. Perhaps it was the sense of being within reach of a long-threatened danger, that induced us this evening, after sunset, to seat ourselves on a fallen column, exactly beneath the hanging stone, and to listen as the moon got up, throwing a flood of silver light among the ruined outworks of Baalbec and down into her now deserted hall, to the Count, who, possessing a really fine, manly voice, sang to us many Polish airs, contrasting them in his own amusing way with our Scotch and Irish melodies. Half the night slipped away, and still we sat in the moonlight beneath the hanging stone in the court-yard of Baalbec; but the Countess, malgré the warm Bagdad capote, in which she had so bewitchingly wrapped herself, felt cold at last; so we went back to our tents, having made our salaams and also our adieux to Baalbec all within a few hours.

The early morning sun was streaming brightly around the splendid ruins as we commenced our

day's march over the broad plain, on the verge of which they stand, towards the mountains of the Lebanon, whose summits, glistening with perpetual snow, towered up into the clear sky, apparently not a mile distant. After riding for about three hours, we approached a lofty column, standing all alone in this vast plain; and, swerving for a little out of the direct road, we arrived at its base. As there were no stones or remnants of other buildings any where near, we were at a loss to know what it meant; all that our dragoman knew of its domestic history was, that Ibrahim Pasha, passing it one day, planted his guns at some distance off, and amused himself for an hour in trying their range, though he failed to do more than knock a few stones out, thereby damaging its personal appearance. Its height, as nearly as we could judge by merely looking at it, must have been seventy feet, independently of the basement.

Another hour's riding brought us to the village of Derr-el-Akma, situated at the foot of Gebel-Makmel, where we found the tents of an American party, some of them being out on an excursion up the mountains, whilst some were engaged in taking their noon-tide siesta. The latter woke up on hearing the clatter of our horses' hoofs, and invited us to refresh ourselves with some beer before seeking the heights.

Of this offer we gladly availed ourselves; but much as we felt this kindness, we could not help indulging in a good laugh at a blunder which escaped one of them during the visit. With evident difficulty he strove to keep up a conversation in *French* with the Countess, who, speaking *English* perfectly well herself, gave him every opportunity of expressing himself in his native language. As the talk went on he endeavoured to explain with what remarkable facility he acquired all foreign languages; how that French was all one to him with English; and Italian—how he rejoiced in being able to converse in that soft southern tongue, the whole grammar of which was poetry, and when spoken became a song! During a pause, he begged the Countess to partake of some oranges on the table; but on her saying that a glass of iced water would be preferable, he drew aside the tent door, and shouting to an Arab boy, who answered to the name of Mike, he bade him bring some “Acqua calda!” The very sound of such a beverage, with the thermometer at 100° in the shade, brought the perspiration out upon our foreheads; but when, a minute afterwards, Mike came running in enveloped in a cloud of steam, which issued from the spout of a great kitchen kettle, whose handle was so hot that the poor boy could hardly speak for winking his eyes,

we were completely overcome, and rushing out into the hot sun to procure a little shade from the kettle, we heard the American "blowing up" the boy, for a mistake which might have ended in manslaughter! The glass of iced water was at last, however, procured, and presented to the Countess, with a thousand apologies for the delay which had occurred, our host said, from never having been able to divest the word *calda* in his mind of the meaning of something *cold*.

With many thanks for their hospitality, we bade the Americans adieu, and were soon engaged in our toilsome ascent of Gebel-Makmel, in two hours reaching a well called Ain Ette. As there was no water higher up the mountain, we encamped at one P. M., having thus made a short day's journey of only seven hours, though the last two, on account of the climbing, had given our horses as much work as three times that period would have done on a level road.

Not far from the tents gushed forth from the rock a miniature cascade, which the Count and I converted into a shower bath; whilst the Countess, lower down the mountain, sat beneath the shade of a mulberry tree, and amused herself in making cigarettes for her husband. After sunset it became very cold,

so heaping together a quantity of dry wood, we made an enormous bonfire in the centre of the camp; and the lurid glare of the flames as they shot upwards, mingling with the cold white light of the moon, produced a most beautiful effect upon the dense masses of foliage which hung over us; for as the leaves waved and fluttered in the night air, sometimes catching the light of the fire, and sometimes that of the moon, they seemed to dance backwards and forwards in a joyous uncertainty as to which of the two precious metals suited their complexion the best.

After one of the coldest nights we had yet spent since leaving England, we struck the tents at sunrise, and in three hours stood on the summit of Gebel-Makmel, the loftiest of the Lebanon range, 9000 feet above the sea level, our horses up to their girths in snow. I need not say that the view on either side of us was grand in the extreme, and nothing short of the intense cold would have induced me to take so hasty a farewell as I did,— of the furthest East that I probably am ever destined to see.

We now commenced to descend, leading our horses, and hardly able to keep ourselves from slipping on the ice. Three quarters of an hour after

leaving the summit, and just below the snow line, we bent our heads as we entered the famous cedar grove. For an hour we rested in its deep shade, gazing with unspeakable admiration, akin to awe, upon those glorious trees, the relics of ages that have rolled away. Since Solomon ruled over Israel, nations have perished and others have arisen in their stead, yet still the cedars stand, thirteen in number, easily to be distinguished from the surrounding ones by their surpassing grandeur. Their huge trunks knotted, gnarled, and torn in a hundred places, even now seem well able to bear the storms of ages yet to come. Their attendant trees, if taken separately, may indeed be admired for their size and strength, yet are they very bubbles when compared with the giants near which they stand. Picking up many of the cones with which the ground was strewn, we continued our descent, a very rapid one, as far as the Maronite village of Bischerre, which we reached in two hours after leaving the cedars, and here the road began to improve. We were again in the warm Syrian climate; soft mulberry leaves and delicate vine tendrils brushed our cheeks as we rode along; and soon after passing Bischerre, the road opened upon one of the most exquisite pieces of mountain scenery

that it is possible for either poet to sing of, or artist to pourtray.

On either side of the picture before us, towered up enormous crags, which totally excluded all further view to the right or left: they seemed as if placed there on purpose to force us to centre our whole powers of admiration upon the lovely ravine, which, commencing from where we stood, wound sunnily away between their wooded sides into the far blue distance. Along its depths, though hardly audible, and looking like a wavy line of white silk, thundered the river Kadisha; whilst hanging to the white cliffs on one side, and half-hidden by the vineyards, which seemed as if bursting spontaneously from every rent and crevice in the rock, was a convent, which, glowing in the evening sun, and thus appropriately built 'twixt earth and heaven, seemed to invite to its peaceful solitudes all who were weary of this world's toils and troubles.

We thought it a very paradise, and quite coincided with the author of our chart in marking it as Eden; but whether he meant simply to pay the spot a compliment, or to assert that here our first parents dwelt, I am not able to say.

On the second day after leaving "Paradise," we reached the sea at Batroum, a few miles to the

south of Tripoli, and in the afternoon crossed over the Nar-Ibrâhîm, or Adonis river, a stream of some breadth and excessive depth, and which is said to flow blood on every anniversary of the death of Venus's beloved; but as the particular day on which he succumbed to the boar's tusks was not specified in Messrs. Hannay and Dietrichsen's Almanac, which my friend carried in his portmanteau, we hardly thought it worth while to encamp on its banks for the chance of its soon becoming due.

For the last time we pitched our tents and arranged our snug little encampment. The spot was a beautiful one; but this aggravated us, as it led us more than ever to regret that, after this evening, we were to go on with the old story of houses and climbing up stairs to bed with chamber candlesticks. Mohammad's savoury mess of macaroni and stewed pigeons had been disposed of almost in silence; thoughts of the morrow had diminished the violence of those appetites which were the result of our free, roving life. Sitting in our tent door, as did Abraham of old, we looked out over the Mediterranean, lying motionless as a sheet of molten gold in the sunset. Our pipes and coffee were handed in silence from the cook's tent; our servants felt for us: was not the period of their service drawing also to a

close? Till a late hour we sat watching the Latakia sparkling in our pipe-bowls, and talking over our tent-life; nor was it until the moon, which was on the wane, shone whitely across the oily calm, that we gathered together for the last time the folds of our tent door.

CHAP. XXXI.

FAREWELL TO THE EAST.

A RESIDENCE at Beyrout of little more than twenty-four hours only justifies me in offering those few words of praise which even the steward of the steamer that drops her anchor in its bay, whilst taking in passengers for Egypt, is obliged to confess are the due of its beautiful situation upon the lowest slopes of the Lebanon, surrounded with its flowering forests of rhododendrons and oleanders, and smiling from one end to the other with the many verandahed villas of its Frank residents. At sunset on the day after my arrival, I bade adieu to all my travelling companions, and was soon after steaming out to sea, on my way back to Alexandria, in the French boat *Eurotas*. When I retired to my cabin the Mediterranean was quiet and calm as a lake, but towards morning the wind got up, and by the time we reached Jaffa at noon, the sea was running so high that we had the greatest difficulty in disembarking and receiving passengers. All that

day and the next we were at sea, and on the third morning after leaving Beyrout we anchored, at eleven A. M., beneath our quarantine flag in the port of Alexandria.

Again was I obliged to deliver myself up for five days' imprisonment, under the suspicion of having got the plague in my pocket; and on being liberated, astonished myself by existing for an entire fortnight in Egypt in quite a pleasant manner, notwithstanding the hot kampsen wind, which blew nearly all the time from the Desert, and which, bad as it is in the winter, amounts to a positive and dreadful infliction in the summer.

From Alexandria to Aboukir Bay it is a distance by land of about fourteen miles; so, hiring a couple of extra good donkeys, I started one evening after sunset, in company with a friend, arriving in an hour and a half at Ramléh, a spot in the Desert sacred to the memory of the gallant Abercromby.

In earnest of the endeavours of a few energetic Alexandrians to found here a sort of town without shops, whither they might retire in the cool of the summer evenings after the fatigues of business, the shells of one or two houses have been hastily erected, and which, as we approached them noiselessly over the soft sand, in the gathering darkness,

stared at us with their great four-cornered eyes in a most ghostly and churchyard-like fashion.

Mastering the melancholy sensations which we felt creeping over us, as we listened to the night-winds whistling through and slamming the doors of their yet untenanted rooms, we selected the best, and cheerfully dubbed it ours for the night. Collecting some dry wood, we made a little fire on the door-step, over which we boiled our kettle; and then producing some tea and its usual accompaniments of sugar, butter, and bread, and a bottle of cognac from a basket we had carried with us, we soon made ourselves very jolly. Starting the next morning at daybreak, we trotted our donkeys over the Desert to Aboukir, where we arrived about nine o'clock. The heat of the day, which was something terrific, we spent in the house of a most curious specimen of humanity, an Italian, long since naturalised as a Frenchman, and who here fulfils all the necessary functions of a coast-guard, quarantine, and custom-house officer. He privately informed me that he had served both in the army and the navy, but prided himself upon his superior knowledge of the latter. His only companion was a young lad, over whose education he had presided himself, and whose principal accomplishment appeared to be that of

bowing, at the same time pulling his forelock of hair and blushing, whenever we made the slightest movement. Out of charity to the poor boy, I sat for a long time very quietly, hoping that he would forget what were evidently the special injunctions of the old man whenever a visitor was present; but so sure as I attempted either to blow my nose or look at my watch, he began to bow and blush, as if some string inside his coat had been pulled in connection with these two operations.

Seldom seeing an European, the old Frenchman was in an ecstasy at our arrival; and when we opened the basket in which we had brought our lunch, he hardly knew how to express the intensity of his gratification: even the boy left off bowing, and looked at the veal-pie as if he understood that better than all the salutations in the world. Whilst we emptied the basket, he cleared the table of sundry signal flags and bits of rope; and producing from a cupboard a bottle of home-made Bordeaux which he classed as “superbe!” to our infinite horror, he placed it on the table, with the declaration, that in *his* house we should drink *his* wine and hang the expense! As for our own sherry, he put that carefully on one side for us to take back with us; but by this show of hospitality the old gentleman

was a gainer to a most alarming extent, on the principle that we should not be likely to carry coals to Newcastle.

The meal concluded, he took us on to the roof of his house, whence we had a complete view of all the spots connected with the battle—the island at which Nelson dividing his line, came down in two columns upon the entire French fleet anchored in shore; also the spot where, three years later, we landed under Abercromby.

In describing the naval engagement, he lauded the English up to the skies; but I suspect this was a slight attention in return for our sherry, as it is well known in Alexandria, that whenever he entertains a party of Frenchmen, he proves beyond a doubt that the English got the worst of it—a fact which he regrets remains only in his possession.

Returning home in the afternoon, we rode all the way to Ramlêh in the track of the retreating French squadrons, though how different now the scene in the quiet solitude of the Desert sunset!

A few days before I left Egypt, I was aroused one morning out of my sleep by the firing of so many guns, that I began to fear that I had been spirited back during the night to the days of Nelson and the battle of the Nile. However, on descending to

breakfast, I found that it was the proclamation to the Moslem world, from all the forts in and about Alexandria, of the commencement of the great fast of Ramadân. By all sincere Mussulmen this fast, which lasts for one Arab month, is observed most rigidly. It prohibits them, between the hours of sunrise and sunset, from either eating, drinking, or even smoking. Severe as are these regulations when the fast falls during the winter months, it is infinitely more so when it occurs, as it did this year, during the hot weather.

Those men who are rich enough to eat all night, as they are allowed, and to go to sleep during the day, are not so much to be pitied; but upon the labouring classes, who are obliged to earn their nocturnal meals by working during the hot air of noon, one does not know how to bestow a sufficient amount of respect. The manner in which they thus acutely pay the penalty of adherence to the Mussulman creed is truly wonderful: towards sunset all the donkey-boys and grooms in attendance upon carriages may be seen, each with his little wallet containing provisions slung across his back, watching, with countenances expressive of the most intense expectation, the sun as it sinks towards the horizon: for an instant only after its disappearance there is a

pause, during which the whole machinery of the city seems to hang, and all eyes are turned towards the principal fort. The donkey-boys, who are a shade more careless about religious matters, are generally hard at it by this time, and are going away at a pace a great deal too severe to last; but not so the more advanced Mussulman: he waits till, in another second, the great gun from the fort proclaims that the sun has set, and that till it rises on the morrow there is a truce to fasting; and then he too spreads his wallet on the ground wherever he may be, and whilst he makes his coffee, he puffs away furiously at his much-loved pipe; unlike the donkey-boy, he commences to eat deliberately, though with doubtless as much relish, in this manner prolonging the pleasure.

During the Ramadân, the law against walking about the town, three hours after sunset, without a lantern is done away with; so, able to dispense with my fanoose-bearer, I walked down one night into the Arab quarters of the town, where I came upon such a scene of riot and confusion, as would be almost inconceivable to any one who had not been out of Europe. The shops which had been closed during the day were now all open, and brilliant, with every imaginable device for showing a light, from a cotton-wick to a blazing pine torch. Across every street

was arranged a sort of cat's-cradle of red, blue, and yellow paper lamps, whilst beneath was enacting such a masquerade, as is seldom equalled even at Vauxhall on the night of the Derby stakes. So densely crowded with men in every variety of costume, and of every grade of ferocity and rascality, that having found myself almost by some supernatural agency in the centre of them all, I quite gave up all hope of getting out again before morning. Here a little space had been cleared for some dancing girls, who were delighting the surrounding feasters and smokers with the graceful movements of their supple figures; there some boys were striving almost in vain to raise their voices in singing above the din of the crowd. Puppet-shows in great variety were exciting bursts of laughter from all who were not watching the dancing-girls, or listening to the singing boys. Impossible as it seemed, I at last squeezed my way back to the Frank quarter, where the darkness was so great, in contrast to the light I had just left, that without my accustomed lantern-bearer I had some little difficulty in finding my way home and eventually to bed.

Shortly after this, walking through the square, I read an announcement to the effect that on the next evening no less than three steamers were to sail for

Europe—viz., The Peninsular and Oriental Company's screw Bengal to England, by way of Malta and Gibraltar; the French M. N. Alexandre to Marseilles, by way of Genoa; and the Austrian Lloyd's Calcutta to Trieste, by way of Corfu. I thus had three modes of returning home at my disposal; and, after a few moments' consideration, having chosen the last, I packed up my portmanteau the next morning, and during the afternoon pulled off to the Calcutta, which had been advertised to sail the first of the three—at 5 P. M., precisely,—but, owing to some unaccountable delay, we were the last to leave our moorings. First, the French boat moved slowly out to sea, her crew waving their hats and shouting, "*pour la belle France!*" then the huge Bengal steamed majestically past us, with three cheers for Old England, the last strains of "*Rule Britannia*" floating back on the sunset breeze, as she followed in the wake of the Alexandre; and, last of all, we came round head to sea. And when, as leaving the land of Egypt, I had watched, long after dark, the lights of Alexandria glimmer for the last time in the seemingly fast receding South, I felt that now in truth I had done with the East.

CHAP. XXXII.

IN CONCLUSION.

THE sensations of delight which I experienced on landing at Trieste, and once more setting foot on stone pavement, loitering about the small marble tables of cafés, listening to the rattle of carriages, and mixing in all the bustle and activity attendant upon European life, after having been so long away in the indolent East, were sweeter than I had anticipated. So complete a Turk had I insensibly become, that, on meeting a couple of *unveiled* maid-servants walking at large along one of the galleries of the Hotel de la Ville, in which I had taken apartments, I felt all my notions of morality and what was correct to be outraged; but before I could remonstrate with them upon the impropriety of their conduct, they were gone; and retiring to my room, I called to mind, as I unpacked my trunk, the fact of my being no longer in the atmosphere of the hareem, where women are but exceedingly large babies, as

incapable of making a bed as of commanding a squadron of cavalry. In the early morning I went to Venice.

Pausing at noon among the shipping, the tracery work of whose lofty spars and rigging lay reflected upon the mirror-like surface of the broad lagoon, our luggage was submitted to the scrutiny of the Austrian douaniers, and then we landed. A gondola carried me and mine from the steamer to the Riva del Schiavoni; and as I glided past the Piazza San Marco and the palace of the Doges, I learned to appreciate a small portion of her charms,—the bride of that blue sea which, lover-like, embraces and kisses her on every side.

For a week I stopped at Venice quite alone; nor did I seem to want other companionship than that of my own thoughts. Here at last I had come to a city possessed of all those romantic characteristics with which it had ever been my delight years ago to clothe all continental places,—broad piazzas, long vistas of columned arcades, immense cathedral churches, so lofty, that windows piled on windows up their walls failed to illuminate the mysterious gloom which hung about the rafters in their roofs, side aisles adorned with great pictures by Titian or Tintoretto, the blackened canvass tinted with a

stream of sunshine through some stain-glass window, marble palaces, domes, and bell-towers—all these, and much more than I have time or space to tell of, I found at Venice.

Stepping into my gondola, I entered the Canalazzo. Leaning back on my cushioned seat, with one leg thrown carelessly on those little side stools of black leather, I gave myself up to the sweet *niente* of the moment, and listened to my *domestique de place* (a very shabby individual, who wore an equally shabby hat, and would persist in carrying an old cotton umbrella beneath a cloudless sky), as I swept silently along. "Here Lord Byron lived: there opposite the palace of the Foscari: further on that of the Pisani:" and thus on I went, palaces without number, now here, now there, my head ever turning as the ceaseless tongue of my guide showered down upon me perfect bouquets of noble names. Presently I came in sight of the famous Rialto, and the windows of my gondola were darkened as I passed beneath it; and thus gliding gently on, ever passing between rows of lofty palaces, I emerged at last upon the open sea on the other side of Venice. And here was a curious sight,—the railroad, the sole connecting link between the "glorious city in the sea" and the mainland. Even as I lingered, gazing back

on what I had left, the morning train came moving quietly from among the domes and spires of the city. So I watched it as, increasing in speed, it ran swiftly across the waters on its way to Padua—strange contrast between the present and the past!

Before I returned to Trieste, I went early one morning in the train across the sea to the mainland, and spent the rest of that day and the night in Verona. This excursion was made simply for the sake of seeing the old Roman amphitheatre, which I had heard was still in an almost perfect state, and also for a stroll about the city, where once dwelt Juliet and her Romeo; and not only did I accomplish both these wishes, but engaging the services of an idling Veronese, he piloted me through a number of narrow streets to the Capulet mansion itself, now a very third-rate hostelry, and where, over the massive gateway, he pointed out, that I might have no grounds for being sceptical, the family arms and motto, deeply engraved in the stone-work. In the evening I walked out of the town to some beautiful gardens attached to the Palazzo Giusti. As I went I met a great crowd following a cart guarded by a detachment of soldiers, and containing a man in irons. On inquiring who he might be, and whither he was going, I was told, "He is a

murderer, and he is going to be shot without the city walls." Another quarter of an hour, and I was wandering among the flowers and fountains of the Giusti gardens, fearfully contrasting my own lot with that of the wretched man whom I had met but a few minutes ago, and who was perhaps now kneeling to receive the bullets of his executioners.

Leaving Verona at sunrise, I breakfasted at Padua. The white mist which had lain upon the ground during the night was now melting away in the increasing warmth of the sun, hanging as it floated gently upwards among the domes and campaniles of the city. All the belfries of the university were ringing out, as it seemed to me, a merry welcome to some one, though, as the good citizens of Padua could hardly be aware of my approach, I did not presume to arrogate it to myself.

A few hundred yards from the university, whose halls and quadrangles, swarming with pale-faced students, dressed in long black hair, spectacles, and meerschaums, fail to excite even a romantic fancy for matriculating at Padua, stands the Palazzo Ragione, its magnificence centred in one immense hall, at one end of which stands Donatello's colossal horse, of such proportions that, when, years ago, on certain festive occasions, it was paraded through the

streets of Padua adorned with flowers, forty persons used to sit, on a level with the house-tops, upon its great broad back. Those times have now passed away, but still the great horse exists ; and whoever takes the trouble, on a moonlight night, to peep in at the windows of the Palazzo Ragione, may there discern, in the mysterious gloom of the great hall, Donatello's giant horse, the fore leg raised in the act of trotting, carved so nearly to the life, that it is almost a marvel that it has not long ago taken offence at the neglect with which it is treated, and trotted off to feed among the pine forests of the Alps.

In the evening I returned to Venice. The Piazza of St. Mark, brilliantly illuminated, threw the blazing result of a thousand lamps upon the lagoon as I pushed off at midnight to the steamer ; and at six o'clock the next morning, I again stepped on to the quai in front of the Hotel de la Ville, at Trieste. That same afternoon I bade a final adieu to the shores of the Mediterranean, about which I had been lingering so long, and climbing up into the impériale of a diligence, I started for Adelsberg.

The sun shone out brightly at first, but soon after getting clear of the town the sky clouded over, and the rain came down in torrents. In no very cheerful state of mind we arrived presently at the custom-

house, where all travellers and merchandise, either entering or leaving Trieste, are examined most rigidly. In the course of my peregrinations, I have met with a very fair amount of annoyance, even approaching to incivility, at the hands of that much-to-be detested class "*les douaniers*;" but I now look back upon it all as the most perfect *obsequiousness* compared with the actual *bullying* which I here experienced. Not only did these tyrants not content themselves with inserting their great hands into every corner of my valise, but raising it aloft, they turned it topsy-turvy, and savagely thumped the bottom. In a moment the counter was strewn with all those minor articles of dress, over which, up to the present time, I had fondly fancied that no one, save the *blanchisseuse* and their owner, would ever exercise the least authority. Prints, bracelets, boots, hair-brushes, studs, and goodness knows how many other things, but a few minutes since nicely packed away, were now being "*made hay of*" on the counter. In vain I expostulated, and coloured with indignation, as I ran after my sponge-bag, which, having fallen on to the floor, was rolling fast out among the dirty boots of the other passengers into the road: in vain I pretended sometimes to enter into the joke, forcing a ghastly smile as one of them asked how much I had given

for a head-dress, intended for my sister. I had to wait patiently till, having satisfied themselves that there was nothing very particular there, they bid me help them to shove the things in again as quickly as possible, lest the diligence should go off without me.

At midnight we stopped, and struggling up out of the collar of my great coat, I asked the name of the place: "Adelsberg! est ce qu'il y a un passager pour Adelsberg?" said the conducteur: "Oui, oui, c'est moi," said I, and down I tumbled half asleep from the impériale on to the ground. Almost before I knew exactly what I was about, I had paid the driver his usual fee, my portmanteau and hat-box had been handed down, and the diligence began to move on. Running after it, I shouted out, to know where the hotel was — "C'est là, Monsieur, là-bas;" shouted back the conducteur, pointing, I could not see where; and in another minute the huge vehicle was rumbling away in the distance. So dark that I could not even see the houses with which I knew I was surrounded, raining hard, and with not a notion as to where the hotel was, I began to feel quite unhappy. Not a sound came to break the stillness of the night, save the plashing of the rain, as it fell heavily from the house-tops. There was

not a human being stirring, nor could I catch the faintest glimmer of any lamp or fire in any of the houses. To make matters worse, for the life of me I could not find my luggage, which I remembered to have seen handed down to me, but which I had deserted in my anxiety to know from the conducteur the whereabouts of the hotel.

However, at length stumbling against it, I lugged it on to the pavement, and then, feeling my way along against the dripping houses, I presently came to a door, which to my astonishment was wide open. Hoping that it was the hotel, I entered, and hauling my luggage after me, making as much noise as possible, I found myself in what seemed to be a large stone hall. Letting go my portmanteau, I groped about, shouting at intervals for the garçon, till at last I found the staircase, which I ascended to the first floor. Almost in despair of ever being comfortable again in my whole life, I determined to enter the first room I came to, and take possession of any bed, whether occupied or not. But in this I failed, for every door that I tried was locked, so as a last resource I set to and beat an alarm upon all the doors I could find. After allowing a few moments to elapse, I fancied, in the dead silence which succeeded to the noise I had been making,

that I could hear the striking of a lucifer-match, and a moment after a foot overhead told me that I had been heard. Presently down the stairs, from some garret in the roof, came creeping an old woman, with little else on than a night-gown, holding a candle above her head. Stammering out what little Italian I was master of, I told her I wanted something to eat, and a bedroom: shaking her head, she answered me in German, which was a language so wholly and entirely beyond me, that I was obliged to have recourse to a series of pantomimes, laying my hand to my cheek and shutting my eyes to testify a wish to sleep, and munching my tongue as a sign of hunger. Almost asleep as she was, she took my meaning directly, and in quite a motherly way, relieving me of the wet rugs in which I was still wrapped, led the way to a room, where, after making signs that there was nothing eatable to be had, she left me, only too thankful to obtain what a few moments since had seemed very doubtful—viz. a night's lodging.

As my stopping at Adelsberg was solely for the sake of seeing the celebrated caverns, I was not a little pleased, on waking the next morning, to find the sun shining brilliantly. The grottoes are distant from the village about a mile; so immediately after

breakfast, obtaining a guide, I set out for the mountain beneath which they extend.

After waiting for a quarter of an hour at the entrance, whilst some men went in to illuminate them, I commenced exploring. Leaving daylight for awhile, I followed my guide down a long gallery cut in the rock, regretting that I had not brought an umbrella with me, on account of the heavy drops of water which fell incessantly upon my head, and at times found their way down my back. When we arrived at the extreme limit of the entrance tunnel, we turned on the right up a few steps, and following the guide's torch, I presently found myself standing on a small platform, overlooking a scene upon which I had come so suddenly, that for a few moments I was quite bewildered. I seemed to be clinging like a fly midway up the wall of a vast domed hall: high up above me hung down gigantic stalactites, reflecting in all manner of colours the numerous lights, which, artistically dispersed among them, produced an effect quite indescribable. Far away down below I could see the river Poik, which having found its way into the mountain, seemed to be struggling to get out again as fast as possible, every now and then pausing as if to take breath before it renewed the contest in a deep and placid

pool, whose surface was crimsoned with the reflection of the coloured stalactites above. In the distance was a small bridge, lighted on either side by rows of candles, which twinkled hazily like real lamps afar off on a foggy night, and below which the Poik went tumbling down among the rocks into the darkness beyond. Descending a long flight of stone steps, and climbing down many ladders, I at length reached the brink of the river, and, walking along its banks, crossed over the bridge between the miniature lamp-rows. After a while, leaving the river, I passed along passages and entered other caverns, which, though they were not so large as the first, were still very wonderful. In many of them the stalactites from above, uniting with the stalagmites from below, enabled me to walk down long avenues of such columns as would have graced a cathedral. The last cavern of all, called by the guides "Mount Calvary," pleased me the most, for not only are there here stalactites and stalagmites without number, but, heaped about in grand confusion, and assuming the most fantastic forms, are huge masses of coloured rock, which tower up into the darkness above, shaping themselves at times into peaks, at times into great boulders of crimson and emerald green.

After leaving the caverns I returned to the hotel, and was picked up by the diligence from Trieste in the same doubtful manner, whilst every one in Adelsberg was asleep, as on the preceding night I had been put down.

Unwilling longer to detain my reader over a description of scenes this side the Mediterranean, and which, as I remarked in some of the earliest pages, ought to be farthest from the mind of any one sitting down to write a book about the East, I close my volume, at the same time assuring my reader, that though he may have seen me last on the top of a diligence at Adelsberg, I have since then ridden in an omnibus along Oxford Street.

THE END.

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